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The Decline of the Black Intellectual

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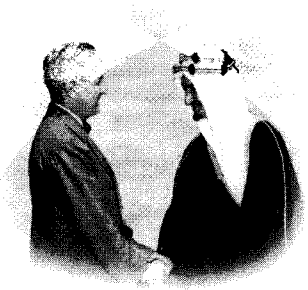
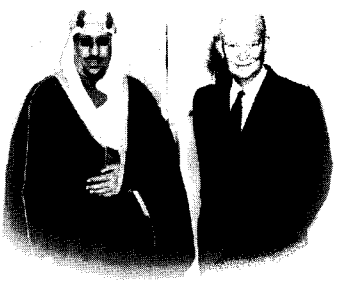
King Abdulaziz Ibn Saud with President Roosevelt.

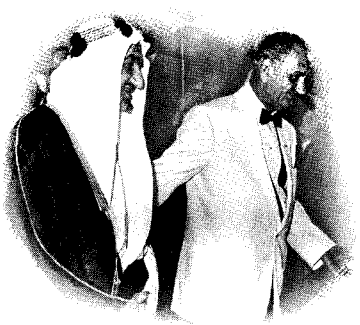


King Faisal, then Foreign Minister, with President Truman.



King Saud with President Eisenhower.

King Saud with President Kennedy.



King Faisal with President Johnson.

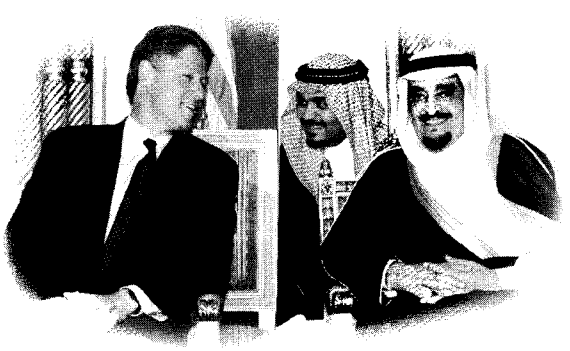
King Faisal with President Nixon.

King Fahd, then Crown Prince, with President Ford.

King Khaled with President Carter.

King Fahd with President Reagan.

King Fahd with President Bush.



King Fahd with President Clinton.

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TRB®
FROM WASHINGTON

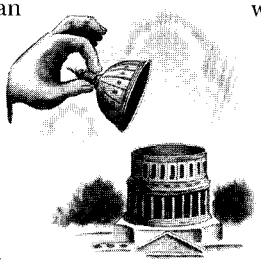
Cyber-wars

I've said all along this is not written in stone.
—Newt Gingrich on the Contract with America

Actually, Gingrich has been saying that only since January. Before that, he was saying things like, "If we don't do what we say we'll do, then the people have a right to throw us out." (Hence, perhaps, the term "contract.") But this is no time for nitpicking. That would distract us from our larger task: to briefly savor the contradictions now afflicting the Republican revolution, and then to analyze their root causes.

Gingrich's retroactive disclaimer appeared in a recent *New York Times* article headlined, "GOP FACING SOME OBSTACLES AFTER FAST START." Indeed. The main obstacle is that it's hard to cut taxes, raise defense spending, keep Social Security untouchable and still chart a "glide path" toward a balanced budget by 2002 without sustaining severe political damage. Wet-blanket Democrats have been noting this since November. Now Republicans are getting the picture.

Witness House Budget Committee Chairman John Kasich. Kasich has long distinguished himself from the average pol by proposing serious budget cuts, and doing so with an ingenuous, at times charming, optimism. He is like a golden retriever, endearing both in his enthusiasm and in his seeming indifference to how few people share it. But now, no longer a backbencher, he finds his words being taken seriously. And suddenly he seems to be wearing one of those "invisible fence" collars that deliver a shock when dogs approach forbidden terrain. The list of tough budget cuts he was going to unveil by late January has been put off until—oh, sometime this spring, he says. And, asked recently what sort of hits Medicare recipients are in for, the man known for urging painful sacrifice replied, "Well, frankly, what I hope we will be able to do is to convince people that we have a system that's going to allow them to have some choice, to be able to get the delivery of services they want at lesser prices." Did he say "*frankly*"?



Kasich's "invisible fence" collar is an example of what a recent essay in *Time* called "hyperdemocracy"—an electronic feedback link between politicians and constituents that is too intimate and thus short-circuits deliberative representative democracy. O.K., granted: I wrote that essay, and I bring it up in part to defensively dispel some confusion over it that has been sown in the media—most notably by my evil twin, Mickey Kaus, in last week's TRB. But I revisit hyperdemocracy also because it's so deeply embedded in the Republicans' plight.

Hyperdemocracy consists partly in the technological empowerment, throughout this century, of special interests. Computerized mass mail, for example, has boosted the size of the American Association of Retired Persons and sharpened its reflexes. The AARP's legislative director says, "The easiest thing in the world is to ask people to call or write their members of Congress to ask them to protect Medicare." Indeed: the push of a button sends rabble-rousing letters to millions of voters. Kasich's reticence is grounded in rational fear of the result—an uproar that could slow congressional budget-cutting momentum.

In last week's TRB, Kaus said I distinguish between this variant of hyperdemocracy—the empowerment of special interests—and a second variant: the electronic plebiscite, in which phone polls, talk radio, etc., render an instant, sometimes uninformed national opinion that Washington slavishly obeys. True. But then Kaus errs. For one thing, he says I deem the two variants "equally threatening," and then asserts that the special-interest variant is "obviously" the bigger threat. In truth, my *Time* essay called the special-interest effect the "more pernicious" of the two. (To his credit, Kaus, upon learning of his error, began rending his garments.)

Kaus also errs (I argue) in going on to suggest that the plebiscitary effect not only is the less pernicious one, but may have naturally benign tendencies. He notes that it favors majorities, while the other, special-interest, variant of hyperdemocracy favors political minorities. Thus hyperdemocracy is internally

continued on page 45

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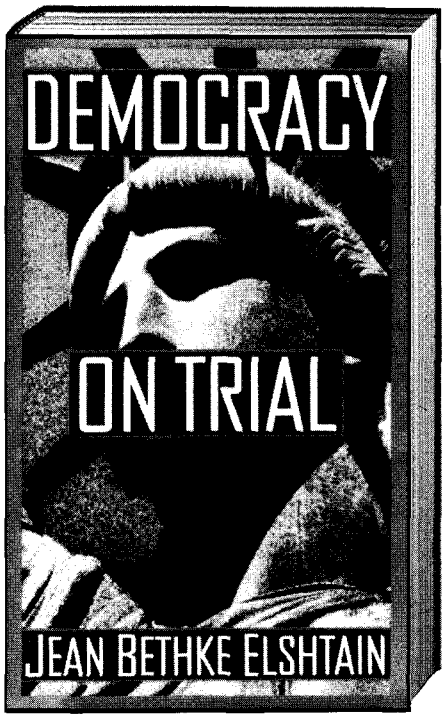

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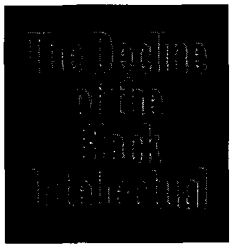

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CORRESPONDENCE

Scents and sensibility

To the editors:

I read with amusement Richard Klein's article "Get A Whiff of This" (February 6). However, he omitted one serious area. I fought in the South Pacific against the Japanese in World War II and on occasion went on reconnaissance patrols by myself. Because of the dense jungles, I could smell a Japanese before I could see or hear him. This was not racist in a derogatory sense, as Klein implied; rather, the odor was probably the result of the food he ate that gave a different smell to his body, even though, as Klein correctly pointed out, Japanese are without the gland that produces apocrine, a strong odor-generating substance under the armpits of Caucasians that is easily recognized.

Before going on patrol, I bathed thoroughly with soap and water, and rinsed very carefully afterward, and then applied odorless aluminum chloride to my body to inhibit perspiration odor. I am convinced that it was my keen sense of smell, and the unique body odor I identified as Japanese, that helped save my life.

BALDWIN T. ECKEL
Upland, California

To the editors:

Several years ago I was brutally assaulted, had my olfactory nerve mangled and lost my sense of smell. As such, Richard Klein's well-researched and well-written piece on smell provided yet another reminder of the ignorance many have of that sense.

Having been locked in a cell in a D.C. jail for a civil disobedience charge—studying after hours in our national Library of Congress (seriously)—where the toilet was stopped up and a thick mass covered the basin's rim, I've found there are advantages to having no sense of smell.

Klein neglects to mention that, if there's a fire, we olfactoryless few can't smell—only taste—smoke; that the loss of any sense creates deep emotional and unconscious trauma that needs to be properly dealt with; and that a loss of smell qualifies one under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

FREDERIC ALAN MAXWELL
Washington, D.C.

To the editors:

Richard Klein asserts in "Get A Whiff of This" that "the male, his nose close to the ground, was principally attracted by the smell of the menstruating female, and sexual relations were confined to the times she was 'in heat.'" If primitive men had intercourse only with menstruating females, under the misguided impression that they were most likely to conceive during menstruation, it is a wonder the human race survived.

JOHN CUSHING
Guatemala City, Guatemala

No panacea

To the editors:

Your February 6 editorial, "Training Wheels," sternly pronounces that education and training are no "panacea" for the diverging incomes and disparities in economic prospects that are increasingly dividing Americans. But you fail to engage this issue, and either ignore or misrepresent the relevant evidence.

Research shows that each year of education or job training beyond high school—wherever it occurs in the course of a career—increases earning power by 6 to 12 percent, on average. Guided by such evidence, the administration has set out to stimulate an increase in skill investments—by making education and training tax deductible; by widening access to low-interest student loans and by easing repayment of loans; by encouraging firms to train their workers; and by providing low-income workers or those who have lost their jobs with training vouchers as well as counseling, job-search assistance and other pertinent information. No panacea, perhaps, but this agenda sets us on the right road for raising incomes.

Some education and training is ill-targeted, incompetently delivered or otherwise wasteful. But the studies you invoke fail to support your broad critique. Regarding the study by Mathematica Policy Research that you claim was structured to "avoid any bias": its author has explicitly warned of the "potentially serious statistical biases in this study that make it impossible to determine a reliable estimate of the impact of training." The author of a second study you cite has said that the program he evaluated "is not a good analogue to the administration's current proposal."

The details of any single policy, or the illusory search for one comprehensive solution, must not distract us from the fundamental fact: more and better investment in human capital—especially for the majority of Americans, whose real incomes have been stagnant or shrinking for the past fifteen years—would be good

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for America. Less and worse investment would be decidedly bad.

ROBERT B. REICH
Secretary of Labor
Washington, D.C.

The editors reply:

First, any "research" showing the same returns to education "wherever it occurs in the course of a career" must be some research indeed. Second, training initiatives serve three populations: chronic welfare dependents with little work experience; younger people who haven't yet settled into a career; and dislocated older workers. The Mathematica study that Reich faults for "serious statistical biases" had those biases for the precise reason that Mathematica's sample excluded the first two of these groups; it studied only dislocated older workers. And that's the point. Worker *re*training programs appeal by definition to this last group—the people Mathematica studied in great detail. The administration is marketing its skill grant proposal as a worker retraining program, and our editorial treated it as such.

Museum rush

To the editors:

Martin Peretz's remarks about blacks attending museums and concert halls is well taken ("Legends," New York Diarist, February 6). But the Whitney Museum is flooded with middle-class blacks seeing its "Black Male" show. The Museum of Modern Art is drawing others into its Jacob Lawrence show. And the Met, too, shortly will be, with its Horace Pippin show. Of course these black patrons are going to black-themed shows, of which there has been a dearth.

Still, there is a little more to it than that. The simpler reason why minority populations don't rush into our upscale cultural institutions is that they don't feel they have a place there. The Whitney, the Modern and the Met are giving blacks a reason to think that they do have a place, and some will keep coming back.

PETER NORTON
Los Angeles, California

Wolverines

To the editors:

David Whitman may not like Michigan's welfare reforms, but he does the state a great disservice by skewing the facts and drawing conclusions that attempt to undermine its successes ("Compleat Engler," February 6). During the first two years of our reforms, nearly 50,000 cases have closed because recipients have earned enough to no longer qualify for AFDC. Families did continue to apply for help as they confronted setbacks in their lives, but the number of cases closed exceeded the number of cases that developed a need for help.

Whitman asserts that only 47,000 recipients were active in our MOST program in September of 1994. What he does not state is that more than 117,000 recipients were served by MOST during that year. He also alleges that only 1 percent were working in workfare jobs, but he neglects to point out that another 26 percent were working in the private sector.

Finally, we did save the state and federal government more than $100 million in the first two years and it had nothing to do with improvement in the state's economy. This savings figure was derived using methods from the federal Health

HOW QUEER WAS TCHAIKOVSKY?
THE NEW REPUBLIC
The Dope on John Engler • My Commie Dad • Manhattan Church Ladies
SMELL THIS
BY RICHARD KLEIN

and Human Services Department and controls for the economic improvement in Michigan.

GERALD H. MILLER
Michigan Department of Social Services
Lansing, Michigan

Red Croatian babies

To the editors:

Like Slavenka Drakulić, I was born in Croatia and my parents lived most of their lives during Tito's rule. However, my memories are different from hers ("My Fatherland," February 6). Yugoslavia for most was a typical Communist regime that suppressed individuality on the one hand, while on the other giving political and social privileges to those who supported the party. Croatians who were brave enough to reject the party did not have washing machines, did not travel abroad, did not see American movies. I, for one, never recall buying dresses in Milan. Their lives were no better than the lives of ordinary citizens in other Communist states, which is to say, not very good at all. Drakulić was a privileged child of a government official who fondly remembers her privileges, but resents the price. Her guilt is thinly veiled, as are her memories.

MARINA C. GRASIC
Toronto, Canada

Nutcracker

To the editors:

I read with increasing amazement Richard Taruskin's review of my *Tchaikovsky* in your February 6 issue. I fear your readers will have been able to gain little impression of the totality of my four volumes, though they may have learned much about Taruskin's hang-ups.

I will not comment on his verdict of my work, and I will let pass some of his ill-judged innuendos on my professional competence. But, as a matter of fact, may I explain that I did not visit Russia to do any of my work on Tchaikovsky because there would have been no point. Since the archives of the Tchaikovsky Museum at Klin were closed to any except a select few Russians, I had no alternative but to use the Soviet complete edition of Tchaikovsky's works and various bowdlerized editions of his letters and other writings.

I am sorry indeed to have caused Taruskin such excruciating distress. But now that he has gotten it off his chest I hope he feels a lot better, and I wish him a full recovery.

DAVID BROWN
Romsey, England

To the editors:

According to the squeamish Britishers, Tchaikovsky had a problem—yes, *that* problem. Thus, he had to wash away the stain of dishonor by committing suicide, after first pausing to write the *Pathétique*'s lugubrious finale to express his anguish.

But we listeners also have a problem—no, not *that* one. I refer to the fact that audiences always applaud vociferously between the *Pathétique*'s third (march) movement and the lugubrious finale—much to the annoyance of conductors, the amusement of musicians and the irritation of sophisticated listeners. In view of Richard Taruskin's revelation that Tchaikovsky felt not at all lugubrious about his sexual preferences, I would suggest simply omitting the finale and ending the symphony, amid audience cheers, with the bouncy march that reflects so well Tchaikovsky's true feelings.

WILLIAM M. BURKE
San Francisco, California

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Why Did You Kill Our Hero?

Petty Officer 3rd Class Harold Mansfield Jr., murdered in 1991 by a white supremacist.

Petty Officer Harold Mansfield had a special relationship with a 4th grade class in Oklahoma City. When the United States entered the Gulf War, Mansfield was serving on an aircraft carrier in the Persian Gulf. The class adopted Mansfield as a pen pal.

The students wrote letters to him, kept his photograph on the bulletin board and drew pictures of his ship. When the war ended, they welcomed Mansfield home with 300 balloons and speeches they had written.

Three weeks later, the students learned that their friend was dead — murdered by a white supremacist in Jacksonville, Florida. (The killer is now serving life in prison.)

Teaching Tolerance magazine told the story of Harold Mansfield and the 4th-graders to illustrate how one teacher, John Roberts, helped his students come to terms with racial hatred.

"I don't think you should ever shelter children from the truth," said Roberts. "I put the words 'white supremacist' on the board, and I had each child get a dictionary. We looked up the word, and we talked about our feelings.

"At first they wanted to kill the man who murdered Harold. They wanted to fry him. They wanted to drown him. All the horrible things you can imagine, they wanted to do. After we got through their anger, I said, 'Let's be real. We don't work like that in our society.

"'What would be some way we can positively let Harold's killer know that what he did was wrong and it hurt us?' The children said, 'We should write to him.'

"In their letters, the children's feelings ran the gamut, the same that adults do. Children are very specific in their sense of justice. Some said 'We hope that you stay in jail forever.' One wrote 'We had our own hero. I was heartbroken.'"

John Roberts and his students attended their hero's funeral. Each carried a rose for the coffin.

"It was a real harsh lesson in life, in the reality of violence in our society, and that sometimes violence is based on racism. ...."

TEACHING TOLERANCE

MORRIS DEES, *Executive Chair*
SARA BULLARD, *Director*

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THE NEW REPUBLIC

MARCH 6, 1995

A VOTE FOR FOSTER

To the White House spin doctors searching for a new surgeon general, Dr. Henry Foster, a moderate black physician who opposes condom distribution and preaches a "just say no" approach on teen pregnancy, seemed just the nominee to counter the Republican tide—and make everyone forget about Joycelyn Elders. Instead, Foster's inadequately vetted nomination has turned into another in a seemingly endless series of White House disasters. Now that Foster is under attack from the religious right for having performed abortions, and then being inaccurate about how many he performed, we are tempted to say the fiasco serves the White House operatives right.

But at least the White House's calculations amounted to an attempt, albeit transparent, to reach out beyond the Democratic Party's liberal base. The attack on Foster, by contrast, emanates from the most intolerant wing of the American right. And the Republicans are exploiting this fervor—rather than acknowledging that Foster has broken no laws, or that his approach to contraception and teen pregnancy largely mirrors their own (one reason George Bush made Foster's "I Have a Future" program a Point of Light). The Republicans, not the president, are playing the politics of polarization. Clinton was right to dispense with the mealy-mouthed pseudo-endorsements that he offered following the right-wing attacks; they were all too characteristic of his indecision and invited further trouble. Now, Clinton should stick to his nominee.

We say this out of no great enthusiasm for Foster. He seems to be a decent community-minded doctor with good intentions, diplomatic skills, modest managerial ability—and not much else. (Meharry Medical College apparently decided not to promote him to permanent president shortly before Clinton plucked him from obscurity.) His attempt to medicalize the issue of teen pregnancy is corrosive. Pregnancy is a medical event; teen pregnancy, especially among poor inner-city black women, is not a medical question. It is a social and political issue. If the administration wants to turn the surgeon general's job into a bully pulpit for a real public health issue, it should be AIDS.

Then there is Foster's White House-aided fine-tuning of his record. He first "guessed" that he performed only a dozen or so abortions, a number revealed to be too low by a factor of three. (He also directed a small study of an abortion-inducing drug, and sterilized severely retarded women at a time when this was accepted practice.) This "mistake" would be more forgivable if it had not come in the same press release in which Foster claimed, preposterously, that all these procedures "were primarily to save the lives of the women or because the women had been the victims of rape or incest."

Still, Foster is no sinister liar, much less someone whose "lack of candor about his abortion record disqualifies him from serious consideration," as *The New York Times* intoned. Rather, his equivocations and errors of recollection strike us as about par for the nomination game as it is played these days. Besides, abortion, not Foster's "credibility," is the real issue. Either abortion is murder, in which case one is too many, or abortion is an often needed, if regrettable, procedure that should be legally and safely available. On this basic question, Foster has been far more candid about his beliefs than some Republicans who have been expressing doubts about him—Bob Dole, to name one.

He's also more forthright than many pro-choicers. He says he "abhors" abortion and considers performing one a sign of "failure." For this, he has been awarded the opprobrium of a group called the National Coalition of Abortion Providers, which brooks no acknowledgment of the real distress involved in having, or administering, an abortion. But Foster's ambivalence reflects an understandable, utterly mainstream, American view: that an abortion is a wrenching decision, albeit one that can't always be avoided; it is not murder; it should be legal.

If the Clinton administration cannot successfully defend this position, then it has truly lost all political effectiveness. Foster is a decent figure, sane on abortion, responsible on teen pregnancy, someone who opposes—to our mind, wrongly—condom distribution in schools. If a nominee this moderate cannot be confirmed, who can be? If he goes down, the extreme religious right will have won the privilege of nominating this country's surgeon general. It should be denied that privilege, for everyone's sake. •

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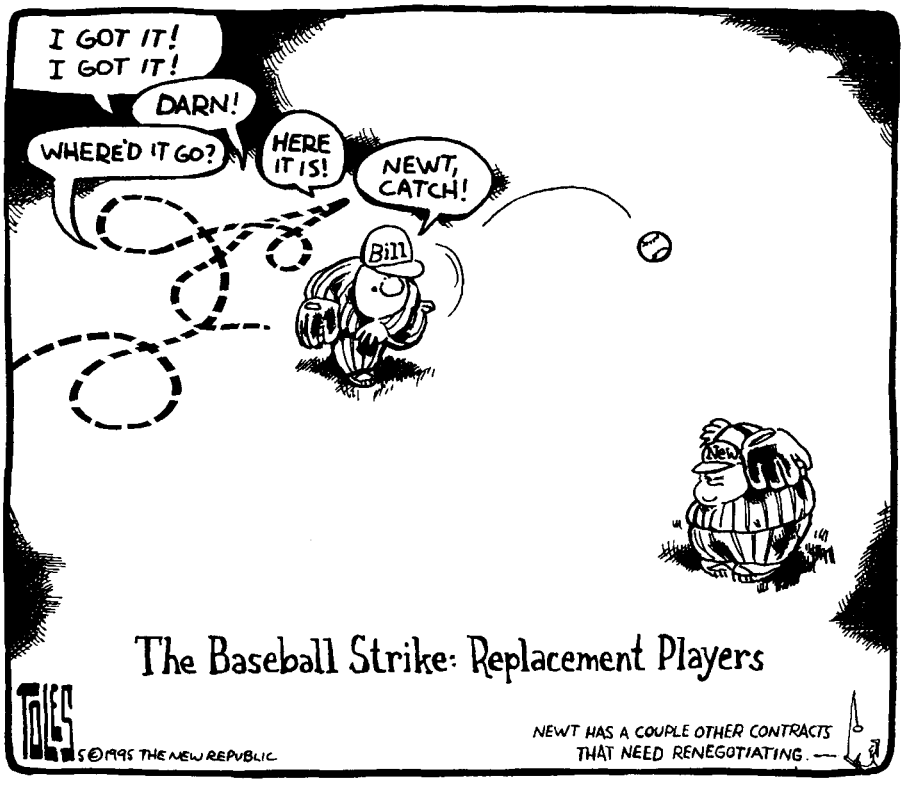
NOTEBOOK

SIC TRANSIT: A month after clarifying to parishioners that tithing is not God's command, but merely voluntary, the Pasadena-based Church of God suffered a 30 percent drop in income, causing the worst financial crisis in the church's history.... An Arkansas House panel declined to pass State Representative Tim Wooldridge's bill allowing public hangings as a method of execution.... Connecticut Representative Lee Samowitz introduced a bill ordering all municipal and state buildings to have baby-changing stations after he had difficulty finding a place to change his infant in the Capitol.... Aud Morstol of Colorado said she would be unable to comply with a judge's order to remove the frozen body of her father, currently stored in dry ice in a shed, because she lacks the $20,000 needed to move it to a cryogenics facility.... Houston Judge J.R. Musslewhite was reprimanded for fondling female prosecutors and drinking the evidence in a drunk driving trial.... Former L.A. police officer Stacey Koon, in prison for beating Rodney King, raised $4.7 million for legal bills and family support through a direct mail campaign.... Newt Gingrich's horoscope said, "Others realize you mean business—you'll meet deadline."



INNOCENTS ABROAD: The good folks at Human Rights Watch–Middle East have come up with a way to cap the violence in the disordered world of Gaza. In their just-released report on the Gaza Strip and Jericho, they have issued an appeal for "all political movements and militant groups to halt and repudiate all acts of violence that violate the norms of international law, especially those that target civilians of any nationality, or that involve the wounding and killing of any person in custody." Hamas beware: the troops of Gary Sick (the chair of the Advisory Committee of Human Rights Watch–Middle East) have drawn a line you may cross only at great peril. The report exudes an odd kind of political sensibility: it takes Israel to task for protecting its citizenry by sealing its border with Gaza. It charges Yasir Arafat's new regime with violations of press freedom, beatings and mistreatment of detainees, the use of lethal force by security forces faced with rampaging riots, arbitrary arrests. Both charges reek of unreality. The first is no doubt motivated by enmity toward Israel. The second is based on the usual romance about the possibility of "civil society" among the Palestinians. The report would have us believe that Arafat's opponents in Gaza and elsewhere are sworn democrats dedicated to the rules of due process. But the recent terror attacks against Israelis should have made it amply clear that the enemies of Arafat have resorted to full-scale warfare against him not because of a sudden infatuation with democracy and civil rights but because Arafat has cast his fate with Israel's government. The usual people have drawn comfort from this report. Hanan Ashrawi, no friend of this peace process, has embraced the report as a great work of truth. We have not yet heard from the philosophers and jurists of Hamas and the Qassam Brigades. But doubtless they will step forth to hail the good work of the *Franji* observers. After all, the deadly notion that Arafat is merely an enforcer of Israel's police rule has been given the sanction of an American group with lofty pretensions. This is not the first time, nor will it be the last, that this group rushes with these kinds of pronouncements to landscapes it has no way of deciphering. There is a point beyond which innocence begins to border on malice. Human Rights Watch has long ventured beyond that point.

SPEAKING IN TONGUES: You couldn't accuse Senator John McCain of underestimating the costs of immigration. The Arizona Republican has, after all, appeared on radio talk shows and thundered, "Every nation has a requirement to control its own borders." He has expressed sympathy with "governors who have to take

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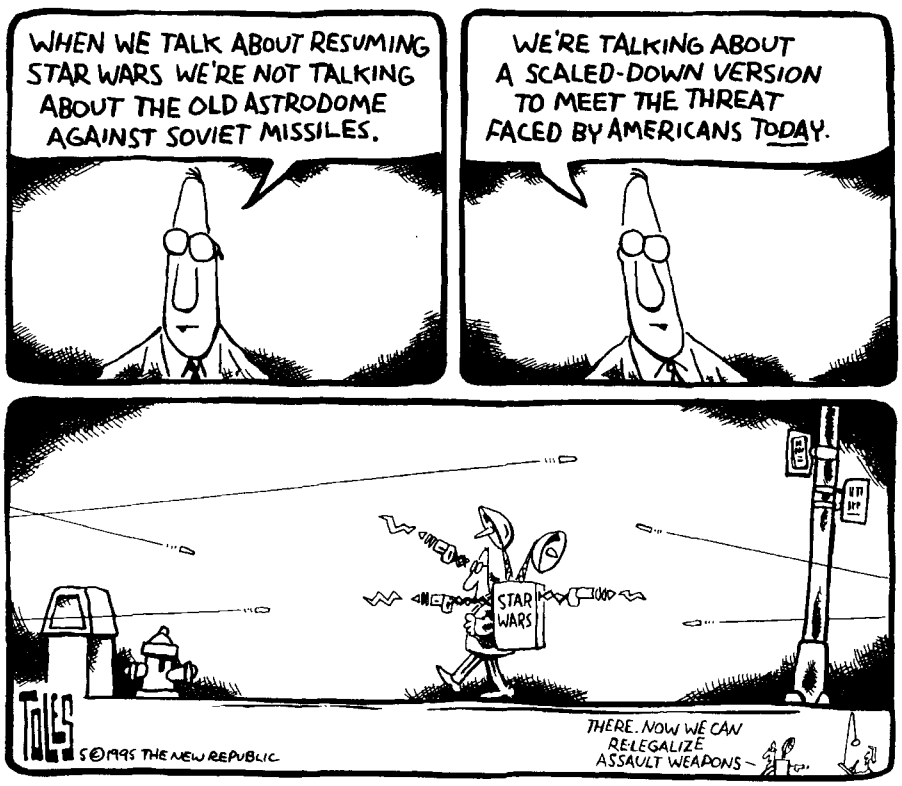
on these enormous immigration expenses." Strangely enough, though, McCain signed on as honorary co-host for the annual convention of the National Association for Bilingual Education, a group devoted to teaching immigrant children in their native languages. In a letter to convention participants, McCain wrote, "To reject a native language as a tool for teaching as well as enriching our national heritage makes learning all the more difficult and makes us a poorer nation." Since the convention was being held in Phoenix, the least damning explanation is that McCain wanted to play civic booster. Otherwise, he's got the debate exactly wrong, by joining the drumbeat against immigrants generally while embracing the single policy that does the most to keep them from assimilating.


WHEN WE TALK ABOUT RESUMING STAR WARS WE'RE NOT TALKING ABOUT THE OLD ASTRODOME AGAINST SOVIET MISSILES.
WE'RE TALKING ABOUT A SCALED-DOWN VERSION TO MEET THE THREAT FACED BY AMERICANS TODAY.
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TOLES
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THERE. NOW WE CAN RE-LEGALIZE ASSAULT WEAPONS.

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY, MICHAEL LERNER!: "My brilliant, funny, passionate, playful, social-justice-oriented brother has brought hope to many through his work as a psychotherapist and as an innovator of Jewish renewal. Now he wants to build a Jewish family and would settle in California, New York or Jerusalem depending on the preferences of the attractive, idea-oriented, spiritually alive (but not flaky), playful, funny, open to Jewish observance (non-sexist and innovative) and loving JF he seeks. Photo/letter and let me introduce you."—*The New York Review of Books*, February 16

MAKE THAT A DOUBLE MACCHIATO:

Bible church's focus is the Bible

—*Saint Augustine Record*, Florida, December 3, 1994

Undoable plan dies

—*Saint Augustine Record*, Florida, same day

Suspect in Train Pushing Death Says He Should Not Have Done It

—*The New York Times*, January 27

Prosecution paints O.J. as a wife-killer

—*Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel*, January 25

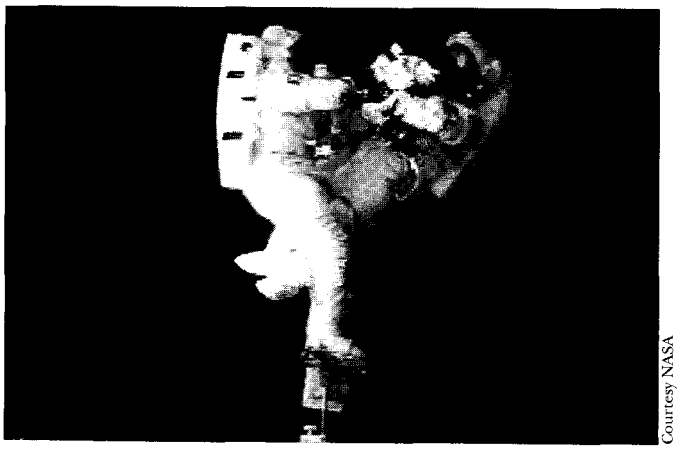
Economist uses theory to explain economy

—*Collinsville Herald-Journal*, February 8

(Thanks to B. T. Clifford, Saint Augustine, Florida, Michael McDonald, New York, New York, Robert Powell, Fort Lauderdale, Florida, and Mark Schusky, Collinsville, Illinois. We apologize for mentioning that trial.)

AGENT McGRATH: We're delighted to say that the author of our Flapjack File (and previously of the Shrub File), Douglas G. McGrath, is to become a contributing editor. This week, he was also nominated for an Oscar for his screenplay *Bullets Over Broadway*, which he co-wrote with Woody Allen. Agent Duke would be proud.

DON'T TELL DICK ARMEY THIS IS WHAT NASA IS SPENDING ITS MONEY ON:



Courtesy NASA

Discovery crew members try to measure how well spacesuits retain heat, February 9

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THE FLAPJACK FILE

OOOH, DEEPER!

By Douglas G. McGrath

Thursday, February 2 THE WHITE HOUSE

Flap strode into the Oval O. all happy because his cholesterol is down to 600. "Morning, Agent Duke," he said cheerfully. "How are your wife, three children and two dogs? Did your son win his hockey game? I don't know if you know it or not but hockey was invented in Persia around 2000 B.C. In Ireland it's called hurling and in Scotland, shinty, but we got our name for it, as I'm sure you know, from the French *hoquet*, which of course means shepherd's crook. Speaking of shepherds, I often think of their pain when their jobs became obsolete. If only they'd had the retraining I get up every day and talk about. What they needed was a Shepherds' Bill of Rights. Oh, well, it's a fine day—Adults' Day, by the way, in Japan, an industrial democracy of more than 100 million people. Let's see what the so-called liberal media have to say about me."

But, for the first time since Coolidge was in office, there was no mention of the president *in any paper.* Flap came unglued. "What's the point of being president if the other Rhodes Scholars aren't reminded of it every day?" he roared. When a Nexis search found nothing, Flap went to Mrs. Rodham-Flap. She was wearing a pink dress and a "Queen of the House" apron. They concluded there was only one thing to do.

The president is hiring a publicist.

Thursday, February 9

Still no press about Flap. "I wish someone would fire at the White House," he said wistfully. "That always gets covered." Mr. Steph brought a list of possible surgeons general, but Flap only glanced at it. "... Against teen pregnancy, fine, take him," he said, reading one of the info bullets under Dr. Foster's name but not the one that said, "has performed an abortion or two, possibly 4,000."

On CNN Quayle said he would not run in '96. Q. said, "I will not seek the office. If I am nominated, I will not accept. If I win, I will not work very hard. And if I am reelected, I will sue." Flap fell to his knees and prayed. "Please, God, let him reconsider. Just give me this one!"

Saturday, February 11 GEORGIA

Because Q. dropped out, Flap is obsessed with whether Speaker Newt will run. He told me he was going to disguise himself as a television repairman to get inside the speaker's house and see if he could find out anything. I couldn't let him go alone, so I had to disguise myself, too. Agent Searle, who is in charge of Speaker Newt's detail, nearly fainted when we walked in.

They had two broken T.V.s. The speaker's mother broke one when she threw a beer bottle through the screen, yelling "Bitch!" during a profile of Mother Teresa. As we walked through the house, we saw the speaker getting a massage from Rupert Murdoch. The speaker was talking to him and a dark, rather strange man named Mr. Toffler. He had this idea about combining the crime and welfare bills. "It affects the same people," Speaker Newt said. "Oooh, deeper, Rupert. Make it hurt! For instance, I think if people on welfare don't find a job within two weeks, we shoot 'em. And I've got the perfect slogan: 'TAKE A JOB OR TAKE A BULLET.' It'll be truly transforming. Of course you can't shoot pregnant women because you'd kill a fetus, and anything that can't yet apply for welfare is sacred. In those cases, you let the babies be born, *then* kill 'em. That's not killing an innocent fetus, it's trimming wasteful government spending. Alvin, Rupert, what do you think?"

Mr. Toffler said, "It's good. We can call it *The Fourth Nail.*" Mr. Murdoch asked if Fox could air the executions.

Just then, the speaker's wife, Mrs. Newt took us to the other T.V. Flap turned it on to see what was the matter but his fake mustache tickled his nose and he sneezed. As soon as he did, Mrs. Newt gasped and looked toward the door in panic. Sure enough, Speaker Newt ran into the room and confronted her. "Did you sneeze?" he said. "Was that you? Are you sick? If you're sick, just tell me now and I'll send you to the emergency room. I can get the divorce papers there in an hour." The poor woman whimpered, "I'm healthy, I swear, look!" She threw some vitamins in her mouth. "And look!" She pulled out a stalk of broccoli and gnawed on it. "Anti-carcinogen!" I was appalled. Flap, God bless him, quickly said, "I sneezed." Speaker Newt said, "O.K., just fix the T.V." "But sir," Flap said, flipping channels, "your reception looks fine." "Well, something's wrong," Speaker Newt said. "I was watching last night and there were two channels I wasn't on."

Monday, February 13 THE WHITE HOUSE

On C-SPAN, Representative Armey referred to Dr. Foster as "Darky Foster." He then explained it was a slip of the tongue and what he had meant to say was "Dr. Fetuskiller." Then Flap called some lady named Chen Sam who is Liz Taylor's publicist. He was excited to talk to her, but when he said he needed a publicist, she said, "What do you do?"

Flap blanched. "I'm Bill Clinton. I'm the—"

Her tone changed immediately. "I'm so sorry. Liz is eating some pudding in the next room and I didn't hear who it was. Oh, Mr. Clinton, what a thrill. What an honor." Flap gave a thumbs up to Mr. Steph. Ms. Chen said, "I've never spoken to a former president before!"

We're sticking with Dr. Foster and ditching Ms. Chen. •

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Newt's closet social engineering.

TAXING THE WICKED

By William Saletan

Does Newt Gingrich believe in social engineering? On page 75 of the Republicans' Contract with America, Gingrich and his colleagues argue that, when it comes to welfare reform, "It's time to change the incentives and make responsible parenthood the norm and not the exception." To discourage welfare babies, the contract "prohibits AFDC payments and housing benefits to mothers under age 18 who give birth to out-of-wedlock children." It authorizes states to extend this ban to any woman under 21. It also abolishes the "increase in benefits" for adult single women who bear children while on the dole. In sum, the government should use welfare policy to discourage poor women from having children.

Ten pages later, the Republicans propose a different class of incentives for a different class of parents. For "families with annual incomes up to $200,000," they offer a "$500-per-child tax credit, to make raising children a little more affordable." The contract also offers a special tax rebate for wedded couples, on the grounds that "the government should reward, not punish, those who enter into the sacred bonds of marriage." In sum, the government should use tax policy to reward rich and middle-class families for having children.

You don't have to be as smart as Gingrich to see the irony. If you're single and on welfare, the Republicans want to fine you for having kids. If you're pulling down a six-figure salary, they want to compensate you.

And the irony goes deeper: while promising to end "government that is too big, too intrusive," the contract proposes, in its fine print, "to change the incentives" by using tax and welfare policies to reward some behaviors and discourage others. Conservatives used to have a name for such schemes: social engineering.

While the contract doesn't mention school prayer or gay rights, and only touches on abortion, the Newtoids haven't surrendered the culture war. They've just refined it. Instead of mandating virtue, they give it a tax break. That way they unite social and economic conservatives: What pro-business conservatives see as a tax cut, the social right considers a reward for virtuous parenting. Who could argue with that?

Of course, it turns out that only one form of virtue gets rewarded. The contract provides no support for devoting time to a soup kitchen instead of parenthood; no support for raising a child you conceive while on public assistance; no support for taking care of your same-sex spouse. If such families are less deserving of relief, that question should be debated. But the Newtoids deny that they're trying to favor some families over others. They claim, on the contrary, that by ending subsidies for new welfare babies they're restoring the economic state of nature: if you have money, you can afford to have kids; if you don't, you can't. Representative Barbara Vucanovich, a Nevada Republican who helped devise the contract's family tax breaks, explains: when taxpayers "have more kids, they don't expect the federal government to reward them."

But it's hard to take this libertarian rhetoric seriously. Vucanovich, after all, *does* propose to give certain taxpayers just such a reward. The child tax credit is designed to violate the economic state of nature. The whole point is to "help families meet the burden and cost of raising children," according to Brian Gaston, policy director of the House Republican Conference.

Libertarians rejoin that, since tax money doesn't belong to the government, returning it doesn't constitute a reward. Vucanovich insists that her bill simply "lets families keep more of their hard-earned dollars to pursue their own version of the American dream, whatever that might be." But again: if your version of the American dream is growing vegetables with your lover on Fire Island, the Newtoids will keep your $500 instead of returning it. The fact that *they* make that decision—not you—is the difference between a tax cut and a reward, between less government and more.

The contract's most egregious violation of economic neutrality is its tax credit for adoption. If you get pregnant while on welfare, the Newtoids will no longer give you $1,000 per year to raise your child. Instead, they'll rebate $5,000 to a middle-class family to adopt your child. The explicit purpose of this tax credit is to "expand the pool of parents to include those who would like to adopt but cannot afford it." So, to enjoy the pleasures of parenthood, you won't have to be able to afford children on your own. You'll just have to meet the government's standards.

One of those standards is wealth. If you earn $13,000 per year, your reward for raising a child is nothing. If you earn $16,000, you still don't get the full $500 child tax credit. But if you earn $70,000, you're entitled to the full reward for each of ten children.

The equation of parental competence with wealth poses a stark contrast. For taxpayers, the contract prescribes freedom; for paupers, paternalism. Regarding taxpayers, it boasts: "Republicans believe parents know what's best for their children—not the government." The child tax credit affirms "the innate ability of every American to make decisions around the kitchen table without some dictum handed down from Washington." But, if you're a welfare mother, the Newtoids trust the government, not you, to make those decisions. That's why they want to replace your cash benefits with block grants "for any purpose the state deems appropriate."

continued on page 16

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This kind of social engineering does have its defenders. Most famously these days, there's *The Bell Curve* by Charles Murray and Richard J. Herrnstein. Murray and Herrnstein wrote that, by certain statistical measures, "middle-class people are in fact better parents, on average, than working-class people." Why? "It is not good for children to be born either to a single mother or a married couple of low cognitive ability," they argue. And "poor women ... are also at the low end of the intelligence distribution." According to this view, the key to progress is twofold: encourage adoptions by the rich and end welfare grants. It is the welfare grants, after all, that are "encouraging the wrong women" to bear children.

Murray and Herrnstein, though, at least are consistent. "The government should stop subsidizing births to anyone, rich or poor," they insist. That's part of *The Bell Curve* that Gingrich seems to have missed.

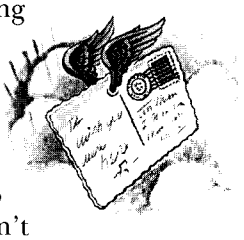
WILLIAM SALETAN, political editor of *Regardie's*, is writing a book on the politics of abortion (forthcoming from the University of California Press).

NEWARK POSTCARD

GET HIM OUT

By Hanna Rosin

"A song from the '60s is going through my head. Man, do we need a change." Professor Barbara Foley, a small woman with owlish glasses and closely cropped blond hair, is trying to connect with the crowd. Some 400 protesters have gathered in the cafeteria of the Paul Robeson Center, Rutgers University, demanding the resignation of their president, Francis Lawrence, for his now-infamous remark linking low black SAT scores with "genetic, hereditary background." Upstairs, a board of governors is deciding his fate.



The crowd is restless, but Foley seems not to mind. "This is beautiful. I'm so proud, I don't know what to say," she chimes. "This country is moving rapidly toward fascistic developments, and you guys are the vanguard." The young, mostly black crowd doesn't react, so she tries again. "*The Bell Curve*, yuck." Some polite applause. One last try: "I have three words for that covert racist. GET HIM OUT!" This sparks louder applause and scattered whoops.

Lawrence's face appears on T.V. monitors broadcasting the proceedings. The crowd boos and hisses, throwing soda cans at the screen. The moment captures, with comic perfection, the breakdown of communication between Lawrence and his students. In a desperate effort to prove his words were an uncharacteristic slip, Lawrence plays a video of his appearance on a PBS show called "Open Mind" that aired last October. In the clip, Lawrence expounds on the flaws of the SAT as a measure of "innate intelligence." He says he read reviews of *The Bell Curve* and found that "the concept that intelligence levels vary based on ethnicity and that minorities are genetically inferior are bad science." He pledges allegiance to affirmative action, touting his flawlessly sensitive thirty-five-year record: greater minority enrollment, new minority scholarships, more minority faculty, an African American cultural center. But no one in the cafeteria can hear a word over the roar: "Hey, hey, ho, ho, Francis Lawrence has got to go."

One of the cans hurtling toward the screen hits the volume button. Now Lawrence's voice booms. "That's not a mistake. They don't want us to be heard," one of the protesters shouts. Then the crowd starts to push upstairs, ready to storm the meeting room. Four photographers tense into place and focus their lenses on the upstairs door. After twenty minutes of panic, guards usher a few selected protesters into the meeting room. "We won," coos Foley. "Just like the '60s."

Inside the meeting room, the session recalls not so much the fields of Woodstock as the struggle sessions of Mao's Cultural Revolution. For five excruciating hours, student after student steps up to the microphone to denounce Lawrence as a racist and a fraud. Hecklers yell epithets. "Liar!" jeers one. "Hang a KKK sign on his neck," calls another. His defenders, mostly older black faculty members, are denounced as "Uncle Toms." Through it all, the target of this excoriation sits still at the front of the room, stoic and completely silent.

Misdeeds from Lawrence's past are dredged up and scrutinized to counter his claims of cultural sensitivity. Angela Washington, the president of the Black Law Students' Association, shares a personal anecdote. A few months ago, she says, she received a plain brown envelope stuffed with pornographic pictures and lewd notes. Considering it a hate crime, she reported it to the president. "And do you know what he said?" she asks the crowd. "He said, 'Don't take it personally.'" The crowd is indignant. "What did he do?" someone shouts. "Nothing," she responds. (In fact, Lawrence had ordered an investigation, which produced a ten-page report.)

Flavio Komuves, one of the few white students to speak, offers more proof. Four years ago, he found out that Lawrence owned stock in Mobil Oil, which invested in South Africa. Komuves confronted Lawrence, who said his mother had given him the stock. "If your mother gave you slaves would you keep them?" Komuves says he replied. "Take your bigotry back to the bayou where it belongs."

The mention of South Africa sets the stage for an organized group of protesters to issue its demands. Three members of the United Student Coalition, an ad hoc collection of fifty student organizations formed

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expressly to denounce Lawrence, step up to the microphone. The first demand is Lawrence's head: "Shockley, Jensen, Darwin—all helped deny African Americans the right to be educated, helped allow African American women and children to be attacked by trained dogs. To this very unique list add Francis Lawrence." Beyond Lawrence's ouster, the students demand that the board make "radical changes in this racist institution," including minority recruitment programs, Africana and Latino classes in the core curriculum and removing the SAT examination from admission requirements. A standard list, much like the one Lawrence himself might submit. The board adjourns for a decision.

As the room empties, one man stands up. Reporters in the room pick up their notebooks. They expect something good, since this man's heckling has been peppered with profanities. His stocky chest draped in a loose flannel shirt, the man jabs his finger in the air and hollers: "If I kill a man I can't apologize and then everything is O.K. The only thing you are pissed off about is that you got caught. Because you are racist and you mumbo-jumbled your words and got caught letting your hair out.... I know what you say in your home about the black man. Well, come after me, because I'm ready for you. Peace." His performance is a hit. Several reporters flock to him to get his name. The girl sitting next to him smiles proudly and pinches his cheek. "No, not Lamin," he laughs, correcting one reporter, "El-Amin. E-L dash A-M-I-N." His girlfriend points at a woman with a notebook. "Look. That lady wants your name, too."

After about an hour, the board returns with the expected decision: Lawrence stays. El-Amin and a friend jump up to meet the camera crews, who are already rolling their equipment in their direction. El-Amin throws on a black sweatshirt and puts on the hood before speaking. "This is a fraud. We'll get him. We'll boycott Pizza Hut and Coca-Cola and every eating establishment that has anything to do with Rutgers." He leads the rest of the students out of the room, leaving Lawrence and some board members at the mercy of the press.

One reporter wants to know how Lawrence felt after five hours of insults and disrespect. Lawrence's response proves him a model student of the Cultural Revolution. "Yes, it was painful.... But it was just as painful for the students to hear those words.... I have to go beyond that.... Generally, I felt there was a calm understanding, and some very wise thoughts." I confirm something I had strongly suspected: Lawrence dyes his hair black.

Downstairs, four comrades from the Young Socialist League are neatly packing books into small boxes—a stack of their newspaper, *The Militant*, a few copies of *The Jewish Question*, *The Life of Malcolm X*. I ask a pale comrade in a corduroy jacket what he thought the significance of the protest was. "At different times, different layers of the working class are blamed for the crisis of the capitalist state. This anger will allow the students to join the struggle of the working class. Have you heard about the student movement in Canada?" •

AFTER YOU'VE GONE

CRIPPLED GIANT

By Jacob Heilbrunn

In 1963, after his now-legendary Boys Nation meeting with President Kennedy, Bill Clinton had lunch with Senator J. William Fulbright. During the meal Clinton was mesmerized by the urbane statesman, a national leader who countered the image of Arkansans as country bumpkins. A few years later Fulbright hired the young Clinton as an aide, grooming him for the Rhodes Scholarship. Fulbright, who died February 9, became Clinton's role model.

Of Clinton's various political mentors, Fulbright was perhaps the most influential. As the longest-serving chairman in the history of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Fulbright became renowned for leading the charge against the Vietnam War. Despite his status as a liberal icon, however, few figures did more to deform liberalism. Far from being an enlightened critic of American diplomacy, Fulbright was a volatile mixture of racial condescension and snobbery, whose abhorrence of extending American power abroad has found its purest expression in the Clinton administration.

Unlike his protégé, James William Fulbright enjoyed a privileged childhood. Born on April 9, 1905, in Sumner, Missouri, Fulbright grew up in Fayetteville, Arkansas, where his father owned *The Northwest Arkansas Times* as well as the local bank and grocery store. Entering the University of Arkansas at 16, Fulbright earned top marks and landed a Rhodes Scholarship in 1924. Oxford made Fulbright. Smoking a pipe and wearing tweed knickers, he soaked up the belief that a democratic society needs to cultivate an elite. It remained his lifelong credo.

After bouncing around Europe for a year, Fulbright earned a law degree at the George Washington University Law School and worked at the Justice Department before returning to Fayetteville to become president of the University of Arkansas in 1939. Although he was fired from his post in 1940 by the new governor, Homer Adkins, whose election Fulbright's newspaper had opposed, Fulbright rebounded. After winning election to Congress in 1942, he informed an incredulous Speaker Sam Rayburn that he would like to serve on the moribund House Foreign Affairs Committee. In his maiden speech, he made waves by defending internationalism against Clare Booth Luce's denunciation of what she termed "globaloney." The liberal infatuation with Fulbright began. In 1944, when Adkins ran for Senate, Fulbright got revenge, whipping Adkins in the primary—tantamount to election in the Democratic

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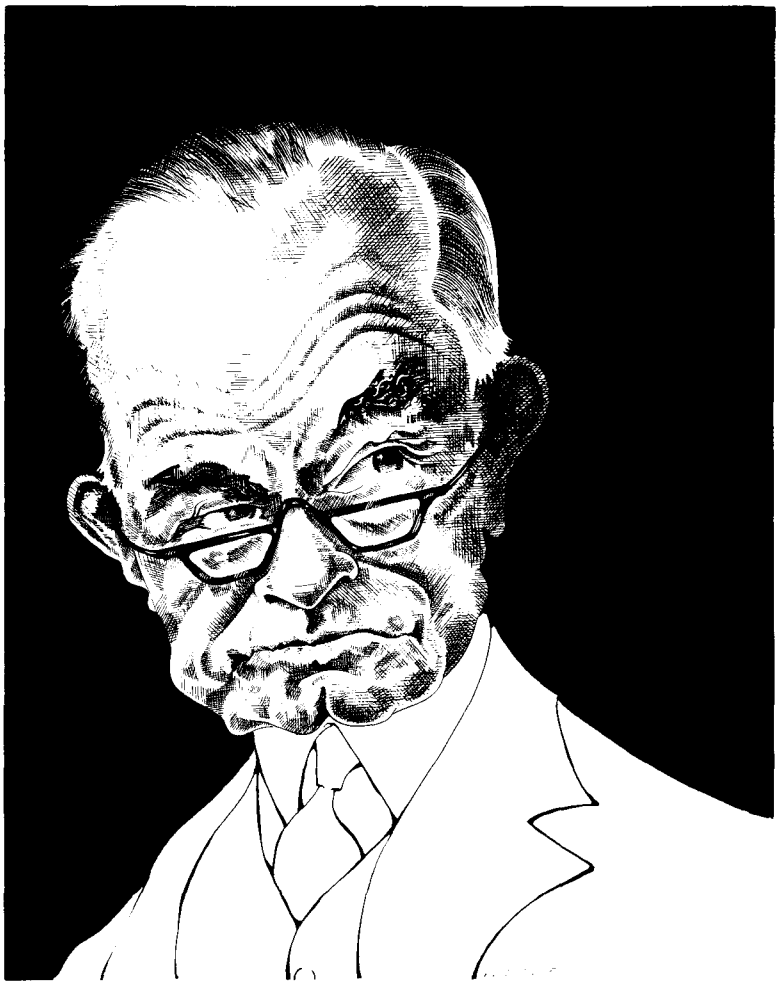
South. He started his career as Senate gadfly.

As an internationalist, Fulbright pushed for a resolution urging U.S. participation in an international organization to maintain peace after World War II. He could also display courage: while colleagues shrank from confronting Joseph McCarthy, Fulbright condemned him and helped engineer his eventual censure. But that courage was conspicuously lacking when it came to racial issues. When in 1944 Franklin Roosevelt nominated Aubrey Williams, a liberal Southerner who advocated ending racially discriminatory hiring practices, to head the Rural Electrification Commission, Fulbright opposed the nomination.

Worse was to come. On March 12, 1956, nineteen senators and seventy-seven representatives signed a "Southern manifesto" attacking the Supreme Court for substituting "naked power for established law" in seeking racial integration. Southern Senators Albert Gore and Estes Kefauver refused to sign. Fulbright did not. Indeed, in September 1957, when Governor Orval Faubus of Arkansas blocked black students from entering Little Rock High School, Fulbright held his ground. One month after President Eisenhower called in federal troops, Fulbright issued his first and only statement: "It is regrettable and it is tragic that federal troops are in Little Rock. The people of Little Rock and of Arkansas do not deserve this treatment. The citizens of Arkansas are, and always have been, law-abiding people." Upon Kennedy's election in 1960, Fulbright fervently hoped to be appointed secretary of state. But JFK, who was bent on improving relations with the Third World, recoiled from the idea of naming Fulbright to deal with African and Asian countries. Fulbright had to settle for remaining chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and opposing the Civil Rights Act in 1964 and the Voting Rights Act in 1965.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

With the entanglement of the United States in Vietnam, Fulbright exchanged his internationalist ardor for isolationism. One of the ironies of the war was that, despite Fulbright's lamentations about the "intrusion" of popular opinion into foreign policy, he never recognized that it was the American elite that plunged America into the Vietnamese jungle. Fulbright's disillusionment with the war had its sources in the fateful August 1964 Gulf of Tonkin Resolution authorizing the use of American military force to attack North Vietnamese forces. Fulbright had shepherded it through the Senate: as the war progressed and the details of the North Vietnamese attack on the American destroyer *Maddox* became murkier, Fulbright felt duped by Johnson and Robert McNamara. It soon became clear that Johnson was using the resolution as a blank check to expand the war.

But Fulbright's opposition to the war also had a racial edge: as supporters of the war often racially stereotyped Asians, so did its opponents such as Fulbright and George W. Ball. Fulbright's contempt for civil rights at home and his view of American intervention abroad were linked. His famous 1964 speech "Old Myths and New Realities" decrying intervention in Vietnam was part of a filibuster against civil rights. In 1972 Fulbright wrote in *The Crippled Giant*: "What earthly difference does it make to nomadic tribes or uneducated subsistence farmers, in Vietnam or Cambodia or Laos, whether they have a military dictator, a royal prince or a socialist commissar in some distant capital that they have never seen and may never even have heard of?"

Fulbright's prejudices were not confined to Asians and blacks. Although Fulbright always criticized Israel in geopolitical terms, unpleasant connotations often crept in. Take *The Price of Empire* (1989). Complaining that "many of our principal office holders [have] fallen under Jewish influence," Fulbright, who was serving as counsel to the United Arab Emirates at the time, fretted that "Eisenhower was the last president to stand up to the Israelis—at a time when the Israel lobby was not nearly as well organized and as well funded as it is today." Israel also fit into his larger scheme of retrenchment. The war in Vietnam had jolted Fulbright into

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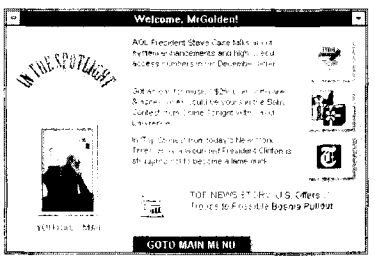

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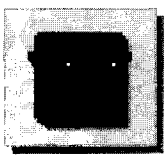

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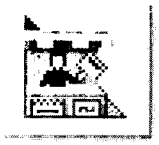

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constructing an influential intellectual edifice repudiating American power. But the problem with Vietnam was not that it was immoral or the inevitable outcome of cold war containment policies. It was that it was a tragic blunder.

Fulbright would have none of this. For him, the tragedy of American diplomacy was that the United States had gone from being a virtuous republic to being an empire whose imperial adventures threatened to upset the delicate balance between freedom and tyranny at home. America's real duty was to resist what Fulbright deemed the arrogance of power, remedy its deficiencies and serve as a model for the world. "We have the opportunity to serve as an example of democracy to the world," he declared, "by the way in which we run our own society." A worthy sentiment. But, of course, few senators resisted efforts to redress the most egregious injustice in the United States more staunchly than Fulbright. What's more, Fulbright's belief in an American arrogance of power was catastrophic. He set the tone for the numerous Democrats who detected a new Vietnam everywhere from Grenada to Iraq. The party has yet to recover.

By 1974 the voters of Arkansas tired of Fulbright's jeremiads. Though Fulbright's aides dressed him up in red suspenders and jeans, Dale Bumpers portrayed him as a sanctimonious curmudgeon and bumped the prophet of America's decline out of his pulpit. Fulbright had confused his own decline with America's. Even young Bill Clinton, who had promised to campaign for his old boss, deserted Fulbright for Bumpers. Now Clinton should finally desert the foreign policy doctrines of the man Harry Truman dismissed as "the overeducated Oxford S.O.B."

JACOB HEILBRUNN is a graduate associate with the Olin Institute for Strategic Studies at Harvard University.

ON THE HILL

FRANK INCENSED

By Weston Kosova

When Barney Frank thinks of Newt Gingrich, he thinks show tunes. "You know what his theme song should be?" Frank asks, setting up for the strike. "The song from *My Fair Lady*, 'Don't Talk of Love, Show Me.' Don't talk of ideas, have one. See, Gingrich has no ideas. The quality of the thought is third-rate. Literally, there is no substantive issue on which anyone regards him as an authority."

Frank is not merely hostile to the new House speaker. He loathes him. Gingrich is "vicious." "Unprincipled." Mention his name and Frank's mood visibly darkens. "Gingrich is interested only in power," he sneers, his hands fiddling nervously with the broken stem of his reading glasses.

But there's also in this vituperation a hint of delight. As much as Frank disdains both Republican rules and Republican rulers, he's clearly loving his newfound freedom to jeer at their idiocies. It was Frank who led the campaign against Christina Jeffrey, Gingrich's ill-fated choice for House historian, saying she had an "offensive nutsy streak." It was Frank who hounded the speaker for his refusal to make House members give up their frequent-flier miles. (In trying to wriggle free, Gingrich has flip-flopped on the issue three times. He now says he'll let members use the perk to fly their relatives to Washington.)

And it was Frank who tried to force the Republicans, before passing a balanced budget amendment, to publish a plan detailing how they would do it. Minority Leader Richard Gephardt and Minority Whip David Bonior may have the lofty titles, but Frank has stepped in as the true leader of the opposition.

"He's indispensable," raves fellow Democrat Jim McDermott of Washington. "Any leader needs people like Barney who can go out on point and make decisions without instructions." Frank himself is characteristically blunt about life in the minority. "It's never been easy for me to think of myself as part of a natural majority," he says. "I cannot think of any basic characteristic where I'm in the majority. I'm gay. I'm Jewish. I'm male. I'm even left-handed."

The first trait on Frank's list is the source of his acute hatred of Gingrich. Frank becomes livid when he discusses the speaker's dismissal of gay rights. "He has one of the most consistently anti-gay records in the Congress," he fumes. "When three members of the House in 1994 said they would never hire a gay person under any circumstances, and some of us criticized them, he defended them. When Dee Mosbacher, the lesbian daughter of Robert Mosbacher, got her father to meet with National Gay and Lesbian Task Force people in 1992, nine Republican members of the House wrote him a letter and denounced him. One of those members was Gingrich. In 1990, in Colorado, he said liberals are responsible for the spread of AIDS because we oppose contact tracing." He omits one count: in 1989, a male prostitute Frank once hired was found to have worked out of Frank's apartment. Gingrich led the unsuccessful campaign to censure him.

Now it's Frank's turn to have at Gingrich. His sudden visibility is by design, not accident. Just before the start of the new session, Gephardt and Bonior approached Frank and asked him to help lead the floor fight against the Republican agenda. "The Democrats needed someone who could give the Republicans a good tongue-lashing," says an aide to a senior House Democrat.

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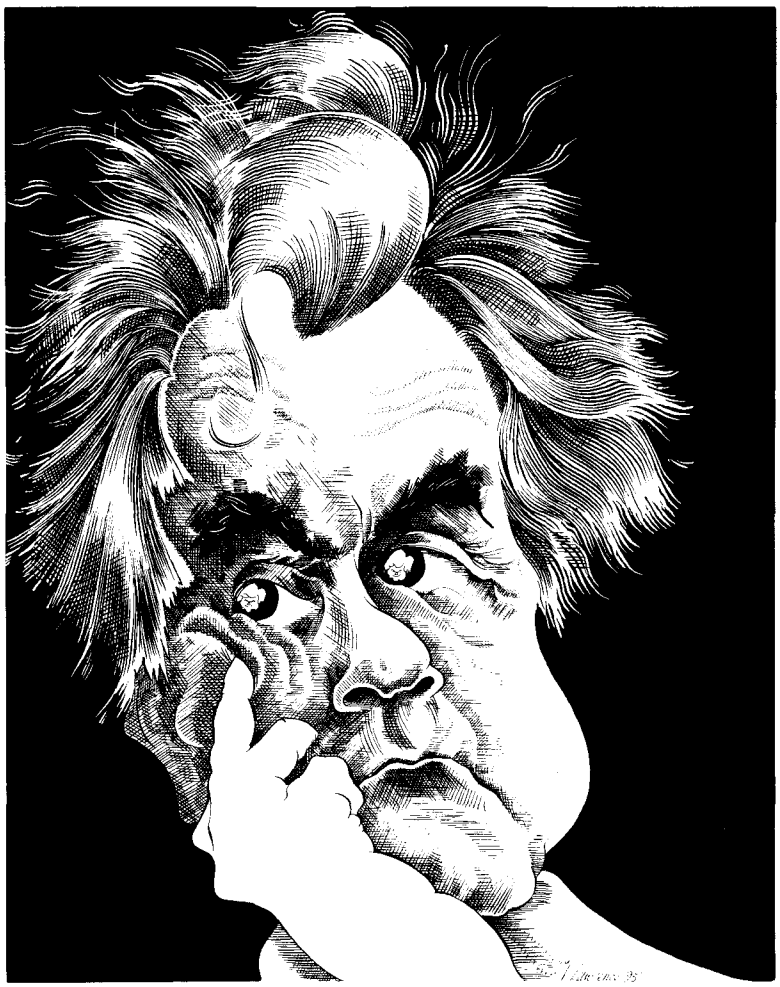
"Gephardt doesn't move people. David Bonior is getting better, but Barney's in a whole different league." As fellow Massachusetts Democrat Edward Markey puts it: "He's one of the few members who, when he takes to the floor, causes people all over the Capitol to turn up the volume on their T.V.s to see what he's saying. In almost every speech there's a line that will get to the heart of the argument."

Frank has another quality that the Democrats need in their battle with Newt: he's mean. After seven terms in the House, Frank is still utterly without patience or talent for social niceties. Ask him a question and he's just as likely to ridicule you as to answer it. He's renowned for snapping at reporters, Capitol aides, panelists before his committees. Last Friday, at a Judiciary subcommittee hearing on property rights, Roger Pilon of the Cato Institute made the mistake of posing a question to Frank. "Mr. Pilon," Frank barked, "this is called a congressional hearing. I ask the questions. You give the answers." Hill staffers describe Frank variously as "rude," "abrasive," "charmless," "intimidating" and a "phone-slammer." He was perfect for the job.



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Gephardt isn't the only one who's been calling on him, either. Last month Frank joined the list of esteemed guests that Bill Clinton has solicited for advice on how to fix his foundering presidency. "Barney plays a very useful role," says an administration aide. "I mean the guy is fucking brilliant. Out-of-this-world smart." Still, Frank and Clinton have had their troubles. Though a free-trader, Frank was stridently anti-NAFTA, refusing to vote for the agreement, because Clinton wouldn't beef up environmental regulations and wage protections for Mexican workers (and, perhaps, because some of his constituents might have lost their jobs). Late last month the bitter episode came back to haunt the president. Gephardt appointed Frank as the Democrats' go-between to the White House on Clinton's effort to win Mexican loan guarantees. Frank favored the deal, but only on the condition that Clinton now force the regulations on Mexico. The negotiations collapsed. Despite the rough patches in their relationship, however, Frank says he's a Clinton fan. "I admire the president a lot," he says. But he's unable to resist a little dig: "One of his problems is that he thinks he can talk his way out of anything."

The strategy that Gephardt, Bonior and Frank have pieced together borrows heavily from Frank's 1992 manifesto, *Speaking Frankly: What's Wrong with the Democrats and How to Fix It.* (Frank was paid a $50,000 advance for the book. He was noticeably silent about Gingrich's multi-million-dollar book deal.) In the book, Frank argued that the party had fallen prey to the vestiges of '60s-style radicalism, alienating mainstream voters. Coming from a liberal member of the party, the critique carried weight. "Liberal Democrats have suffered from our association with—and occasional defense of—the angry, disruptive protesters of the '60s and '70s and their heirs," he wrote. "That is why Democrats have lost five of the last six presidential contests." Frank placed himself squarely on the side of winning back the middle class, of restoring the Democrats' reputation as defenders of normal Americans.

That is Frank's plan for the minority. "First of all, we'll highlight the Republicans' extremism on things like abortion," he says. On economic issues, it'll be the trusty standard of class warfare. "It's not going to be popular to do those upper-level tax cuts, and I think we win on that. On the other hand, we use up some political capital trying to defend legal immigrants and welfare recipients, which is our moral obligation." In the coming months, House Democrats will also push to tax the top 12 percent of Social Security recipients and to fold a minimum-wage hike into the emerging welfare reform bill. Meanwhile, Frank drills away on another pet project: military downsizing. "This notion that we have to be able to fight two full-scale wars simultaneously, by

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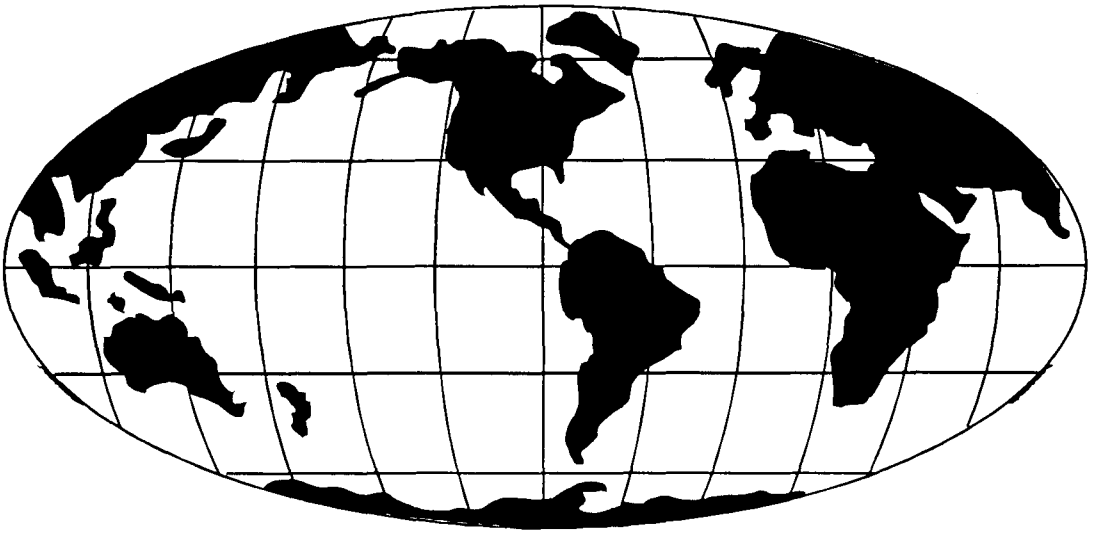

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ourselves, while at the same time deterring the Russians in a nuclear way is nonsense," he says. "The Russians can't beat Chechnya."

Frank knows his chances of eviscerating the military are nil and that even suggesting it is hugely unpopular. But it doesn't matter. In the minority, he has the luxury of launching whatever outlandish schemes he can think of. One of the keys to Frank's abandon is that he has little to fear from the voters back home. He holds arguably the safest seat in the House, where upper-middle-class liberals and working-class ethnics re-elect him routinely, often without opposition. After the 1989 scandal, his popularity actually increased. And once you've been exposed for having a gay hustler ring in your basement—and survived—there's not too much more you have to worry about.

Frank is biding his time until the first 100 days are up and the Republicans are faced with the bill for their agenda. "Remember, the contract is made up of items the Republicans preselected because they are very popular," he says. "But soon they're going to run through the contract. And then they're going to have to do appropriations and taxes. And it will get harder and harder for them." Frank, for one, will make sure of it. •

An erotic appreciation of New York's shows.

IT'S RAINING MEN

By Laura Jacobs

Three fashion seasons ago (one and a half years in human time) American designers began to show their women's ready-to-wear collections in two tents in Manhattan's Bryant Park, the lawn behind the public library on Forty-Second Street. The tents were named Josephine and Gertrude, and, though both were white on the outside, inside Josephine was white and Gertrude was black—a perfect positive-negative snapshot of the female fashion circus mid-'90s. It's a satisfying opposition. The imperial rose Josephine made fashionable the idea of the rose garden; a century later Gertrude Stein plucked the petals from the metaphor, writing "a rose is a rose is a rose"—her weary ode to the overblown. Today almost everything we see on these twin runways is born in the echo chamber between straight historical reference and contemporary syntax; between pin curls, ribbons and empire slips and the abyss-answering puns of postmodernism.

Sleekly organized by a company called 7th on Sixth, and extremely convenient, the centralized collections were an instant, roaring success—a *new* New York event. No more crowding into elevators in garment district tenements, dashing from one studio to another, fighting rivals for cabs. No need for designers to restage showroom presentations two or three times in one day when the tents were big enough to fit everyone at once. Idea! If it worked so well for the women's collections, why notmen's, too? But could a parade of men in pants and jackets, in pants and sweaters, in pants and shirts, in just pants—could it be *interesting*? Even *The New York Times* Sunday Styles section, waving its pennant for everything hip, wondered how the designers could "turn on" their runways without turning off retailers and reporters.

Throwing worry to the wind, the men's fall collections commenced last week in their first organized shows. These did not take place in Bryant Park, however, but in three locations on West Fifty-Fourth Street, between Ninth and Tenth Avenues. It's a neighborhood of sound studios and car dealerships, big spaces on little streets. Like the tents, the men's spots had names, too: Sony, Hit Factory, New York Prop Gallery. A different gender, a different tone, a different set of references. Sony suggests tech weens and Walkmen; Hit Factory, rock star stubble and drugs. Prop Gallery opens another agenda: if you feel that the fashion fantasias of women make them dolly-birds to the more soberly attired, civilly liberated male, here's a counterview, the Lawrencian one (D. H. not T. E.): man as chiseled chin, as bodystockinged stagehand to the female imagination.

As for male imagination, Freud never exactly asked what *men* wanted, but if he had studied male models for the answer he may have concluded what so many of us learn along the way: they want not to make a scene. Watching men on the runway—that heightened ramp the women wrap around their fingers *and* walk on like water—you note a strange air of absence, of chuckling reverb, a not knowing what to do with their hands

LAURA JACOBS, editor in chief of *Stagebill*, is author of the forthcoming *The Art of Haute Couture* (Abbeville Press).

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(within steps they hook them into their pockets; for he who can't find his pockets, a nanosecond of panic). Blue-eyed beauts mostly, except for the Persian princes, these faces often remind you of someone else—a film star from the past, or a soap character, or a Seattle waif boy—and their regular-guy strolls only add to the camouflage.

Male models simply don't play to the crowd the way the women do, and they certainly don't get the same come-on from the photographers' bank, which is always situated at the end of the runway. At the women's collections, that mass of ground glass and black plastic is a spectacle in itself—a tangle of soul-sucking cylinders, bigger and bigger lenses zooming toward babeville. The photographers fight for the picture, call to the girls, lunge for a personal connection. Sometimes they get a rosy smile in return, or some sass. But the men aren't so easy to reach, keeping their eyes above it all or hunkered down below, and the cameras hold steady, clicking like clocks.

Corina Lecca

MEN IN ANTLERS, JOHN BARTLETT FALL COLLECTION

Pictures, though, can't capture the thrill of seeing a pageant of male beauty that isn't linked to some priapic act of aggression, doesn't have a dark angel sitting on its shoulder. There were shows that, sending out one strapping six-footer after another, had me a-tingle, thinking *whoah*, what a piece of work *is* a man. At Joop!, the exuberant German designer who drew a full house at Sony during February's first freeze, we got a slew of Alpine gods, bangs brushed over their noses. More chills up his sleeve, Joop! sent out the coup de théâtre of the collections, flown in from Germany I later heard: big, blond, broken-nosed *triplets* with cream complexions and dressed in identical cream sweaters and cream slacks. After shaking off the déja vu-vu, I laughed out loud at this Labrador (laboratory) litter of picks. They came out three times and their every turn on the runway was keyed to the sound of cold winds, their every reappearance, one by one by one, a form of snowblindness, an eerie Aryan fear-trill. (I take that back about the dark angels.)

No one did full frontal gorgeous better than Joop!, but of all the Balthus-boy suits he sent out not one would do for lunch with the boss. In fact, for sheer brilliance, Joop!'s compatriot Hugo Boss walked away with the week. It was through their suits that designers were defining their visions and, as if competing for the Anne Hollander Award, they sent out every conceivable cut, from one to six buttons, frock-coats to public school jackets, Wyatt Earp to "Lucky" Luciano, Paul Morel to Mellors the gamekeeper. It often happens that one designer catches all the airwaves and calibrates cut so fine he tracks into another warp speed. That was Boss, who adjusted the high, nipped Savile Row waists, and trimmed the Edwardian lengths into dashing constructions of edgy elegance. He showed midweight wools so superbly stressed and eased that you *saw* the echoes. There were velvet suits in which you could read the thoughts of Offenbach's student-dandies, yet were CEO sotto voce.

Woolly and rural and archetypal, voluptuously so, was the other trend of the collections, a touching counterpoint to the techno-void we're now entering. Young star Robert Massimo Freda sent out tweeds as thick as porridge, shooting jackets with a Merchant-Ivory ache, shearing-day sweaters with cables that jutted like jugulars. Robert Comstock titled his rough-wear show "Endurance." And, looming on the backdrop at John Bartlett, pieced together as if by seven dwarfs, was a collage of green clothes in the shape of a gargantuan (Bartlett) pear—a fairy-tale gesture ripe with the usual connotations of eating and being eaten, a Brothers Grimm forest motif fleshed out by models wearing stag horns, some jolly green giant outfits and "birds-eye fat-free" suits.

What do American men want for fall 1995? To wear Norfolk jackets into cyberspace. To find existential equanimity in a three-piece suit. To go outside and not

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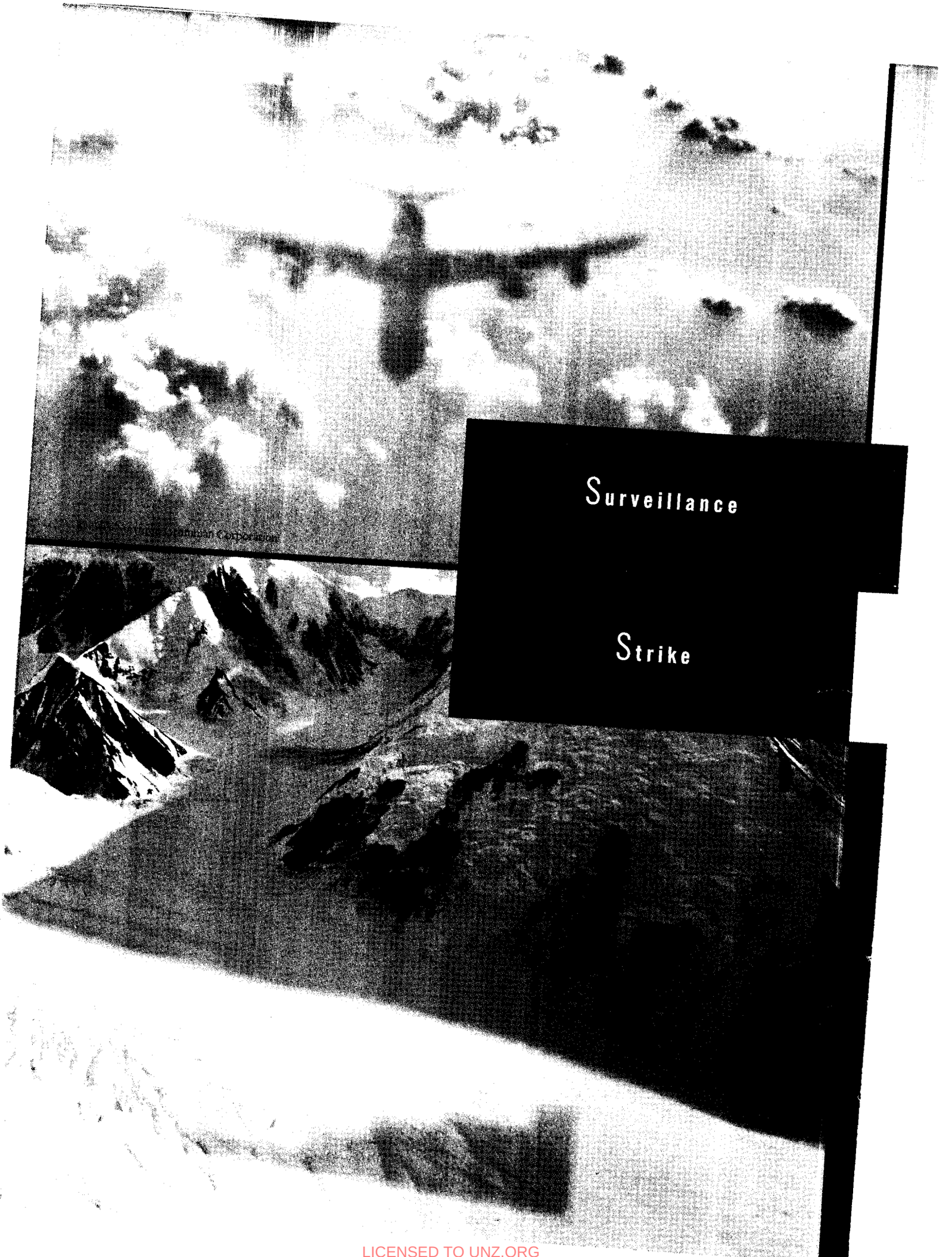

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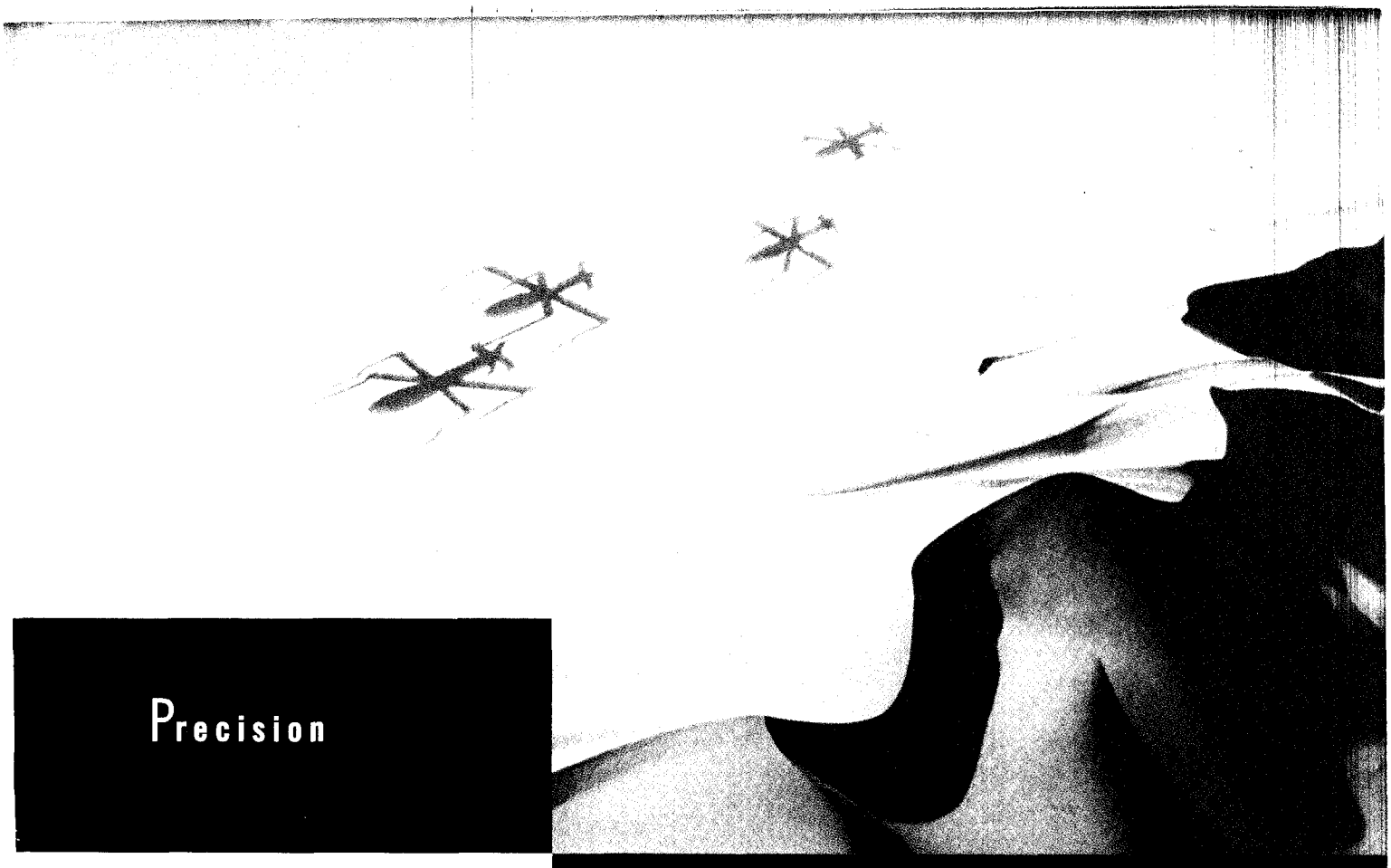

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be killed or cooked. What do they want? Look at the current hit movie, four weeks at the top of the chart. *Legends of the Fall* may be a stuffed saddlebag of genres (alternative title: *The Sons of Katie Elder and Sergeant York Meet Where the River Runs Through Bonanza*), but it hits a pure note whenever we see Brad Pitt riding horses, wrestling bears and knowing Indian ways. In his Montana suedes and wrinkled pinstripes he's irresistibly invincible (he was unkillable in *Interview with a Vampire,* too) and—merchandising perk—every stitch on his back could walk happily down our runways.

People magazine recently named Pitt its Sexiest Man of the Year, and his blond-pink-and-blueness is a Hollywood tradition. But the zeitgeist icon is David Duchovny of Fox's "x-Files," the Friday night series in which he and Gillian Anderson play two FBI agents investigating the paranormal and the supernatural. In true "x-File" meta-form, Duchovny's character is named "Fox" Mulder, and his every fashion move is monitored on the computer lines, from his haircuts to his ties to the look in his brown eyes. Machines all over America booted up after a show in which he climbed out of the company pool wearing a Speedo. Style question of the hour: Did David dress left or right? Answer: sort of at an angle. Now *that's* a following.

Exploiting the current arsenal of disk-drive wizardry, Mulder often works inside; but he's outdoorsy, too, or rather "out there," where, the show tells us, the truth is. Alien atmospheres are his beat, but he pads a luminous planet Earth. Light rain is a pervasive and soothing serial music, naked branches emerge from plush clouds, high beams search glistening maws. If John Wayne were still riding, this would be his range.

At some point "x-Files" will require a hifalutin essay: an Erotics of the Unidentified. In Duchovny's other T.V. gig, he's host for the softcore cable show "Red Shoe Diaries" (i.e., twentysomethings and their demon lovers). Files and diaries, seeing and knowing, blips and pixels begging to be connected—the heat of Mulder is his eye-mind coordination, the old romantic imagining and his almost tender arm-wrestle with omniscience. Yet, even as he explores phenomena such as morphs and mind control, Indian ways and Joop!'s triplets, he's watching his back, on guard against the home team. "Trust no one" is the show's other tag line. Fox is hunter and hunted—Mellors at the millennium. That once-indivisible, middle-America, FBI-issue suit is no protection at all. •

How not to teach the Holocaust.

NOT FACING HISTORY

By Deborah E. Lipstadt

In the recent flap over the Holocaust curriculum "Facing History and Ourselves," it was easy enough to demolish the criticisms offered of the program. Christina Jeffrey, Newt Gingrich's nominee for House historian, had, it turned out, recommended that the program be denied a Department of Education grant because it did not present the Nazi "point of view." She was wrong about that—the edition of Facing History that she reviewed contains no less than sixteen quotes from the works of Adolf Hitler, along with citations from the speeches and writings of Heinrich Himmler, Herman Goering, Alfred Rosenberg and other leading Nazis, selections from Nazi Party platforms, Third Reich textbooks and Reichstag deliberations. (Even if the program weren't so thorough on this point, the Holocaust is not exactly an issue on which both "sides" require equal hearing.) Jeffrey revealed her own preconceptions when she argued that "the serious anti-Semitism in our day is on the left" and accused Facing History of displaying an "anti-Christian bias" that made it appropriate only "for a limited religious audience." The irony is that she was right to criticize Facing History; it was the reasons for criticizing it that she got woefully wrong. Had Jeffrey and her fellow reviewers not been so blinded by their right-wing agenda they might have helped instigate a much-needed critique of Holocaust education.

The thinking behind Facing History needs to be examined more closely because it has become perhaps the most influential model for teaching the Holocaust in the United States and yet is deeply flawed. Facing History, which is made up of both a teacher training program and a suggested curriculum, reaches about 500,000 students per year, mostly in the eighth and ninth grades. Devised by a group of Brookline, Massachusetts, teachers in 1976, it has not only been widely

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adopted, but widely praised as well. Facing History and its imitators have become the way in which many of our school children learn to think about the Holocaust.

In some respects, that is not a bad thing. Facing History is an ambitious program that avoids the pitfalls of many other curricula by providing students with a history of both anti-Semitism and the Weimar Republic's political and financial weaknesses. It traces the rise of the National Socialists from the 1920s and demonstrates how they relied on terror to build their power base. It analyzes resistance to the Nazis, Allied indifference, the role of the bureaucracy in conducting the genocide and the heroic behavior of the rescuers. It raises the question of what the German public knew about the campaign against the Jews and asks students to consider what might have been done to stop it. I have met many teachers who say that Facing History has deeply affected them and helped them to make the Holocaust relevant to their students.

National Archives, Courtesy U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum

So why am I left uneasy? My discomfort has less to do with the way the Holocaust is approached and more with the context into which it is placed. Facing History addresses a broad array of injustices including the Armenian genocide and American racism. It attempts to bring the Holocaust into the orbit of the students' experiences by providing a section at the end of each chapter called "Connections," which includes subjects such as racism and violence in America—though not contemporary anti-Semitism. It presents the Holocaust as an occasion for teaching lessons in moral reasoning and good (American) citizenship; as an object lesson, a generic inoculation against prejudice.

The problem with this approach is that it elides the differences between the Holocaust and all manner of inhumanities and injustices. Though Executive Director Margo Strom and her colleagues are adamant that this is not their intention, it is hard to imagine how a teacher constructing a curriculum based on Facing History could adopt any other mode.

At times, instead of making history relevant, Facing *History distorts it.* The current edition of the resource book opens with a quote from Marian Wright Edelman warning that the "American dream is collapsing" and that racists and political demagogues often take advantage of economic crises. No teacher using this material can help but draw the historically fallacious parallel between Weimar Germany and contemporary America. The 1982 edition, which is the one Jeffrey reviewed, links the Holocaust with Hiroshima. The editors claim that the Holocaust and "a study of potential nuclear holocaust" share certain "basic principles," though teachers are cautioned not to "draw too strong parallels." This cautionary sentence is followed by six pages of readings and suggested activities for kids designed to stress the threat of nuclear war. The final paragraph of the 400-page resource book suggests that students contact Facing History for a list of groups involved in nuclear deterrence in order to "explore their potential for making a difference."

I have no idea what "basic principles" these phenomena share. All instances of mass destruction are not the same. The results may be similarly devastating but that does not mean they stem from the same motivation or are carried out in the same spirit. The 1994 edition of Facing History has wisely eliminated the section on nuclear war but it retains the references to Hiroshima and Nagasaki and adds points of comparison such as the My Lai Massacre, meant to suggest that one of the roots of the Holocaust was a psychological tendency to obey orders unthinkingly. But, as the historian Lucy Dawidowicz and others have observed, obedience is not the fundamental element of totalitarian society; terror is.

While positing the Holocaust as unique, Facing History presents mass murders in Cambodia, Laos, Tibet and Rwanda as examples of the same phenomenon. Each of these was a horrific tragedy, but all are different from the Holocaust. This is not a matter of comparative pain—an utterly useless exercise—but of historical distinction. The issue is not who lost more people or a greater proportion of their society, but what was at the root of the genocidal efforts.

To say that the Holocaust is not the same as other more local and less bureaucratized and single-minded examples of mass killing is not to rule out all points of comparison. Ultimately, the only way we learn is through

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Good Germans

The Germans are nervous. The Holocaust Museum, *Schindler's List*, neo-Nazis on T.V. Could Americans be getting the wrong impression of their country? Recently, the Bonn government has been making an extraordinary effort to remind Americans about the "good Germans"—those who fought Hitler and who established postwar German democracy. Their principal showpiece so far is an exhibit about German resistance to Hitler, which premiered at the Madison Gallery of the Library of Congress in July and has been touring American universities since. But the exhibit, "Against Hitler: German Resistance to National Socialism, 1933-1945," is highly misleading. Among other things, it overstates the political importance of the resistance, distorts the goals of the anti-Hitler Germans and inflates their role in establishing democracy after the war.

How did this exercise in public relations come to pass? Its premiere marked the first time the Library of Congress has presented an exhibition organized and paid for by a foreign government. If the library wanted a show on German resistance to Hitler, shouldn't its own expert curatorial staff have organized it? If the Bonn government wanted to offer Americans propaganda, wouldn't their embassy have been a more appropriate venue? Indeed, Librarian of Congress James Billington initially refused to accept the show; but political pressure from the Bonn government prevailed. While the library, like all museums, normally schedules exhibitions two or three years in advance, the Germans got in with only three months' notice. According to Helen Dalrymple, acting public affairs officer of the library, the staff suddenly discovered "a summer hole" that had "opened up in the schedule." To make this hole, the library kicked out artist Leonard Baskin, whose exhibition of prints was running in the Madison Gallery. An abbreviated version of his show was moved to the obscure corridors of the building's sixth floor.

The German motivation for the show was clearly political. The end of the cold war has aroused Germany's anxieties about American public opinion. As long as Germany served as the West's bulwark against the Soviet Union, as long as American troops, tanks and missiles stood ready to fight World War III there, Germany could claim American respect and gratitude. But since 1989 that justification has disappeared, while the rise of neo-Nazism, as well as the D-Day celebrations in Normandy last June, have reminded Americans of that other Germany.

The opening of the Holocaust Museum in 1993 increased German anxieties. The Washington correspondent of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* asked whether it was "advisable" to leave "millions of visitors" with "the lasting impression" that "these are the Germans and this is Germany." First, the German government offered to fund a permanent wing of the Holocaust Museum honoring the good Germans; the museum declined. Bonn then proposed that the American government sponsor a Washington premiere for the current exhibit on resistance to Hitler.

But the exhibit itself is hardly worth the Germans' massive effort. It includes forty-three panels of English text, illustrated by small black-and-white photos. It presents a considerable amount of information about several hundred people who stood up to the Nazi regime. Buried in the text are some powerful and moving accounts of heroism. But the format is deadly.

More important, the show is marked by what Hans Mommsen, professor at the Ruhr-Universität Bochum and one of the leading German historians of resistance activity, called "grave conceptual weaknesses." The size of the exhibit implies that resistance was extensive and politically meaningful, whereas in reality it had no effect politically or militarily. The exhibit suggests that all these good Germans were working toward the same objective; in fact, opponents of the regime had mutually antagonistic political goals: some were leftists, some liberals, some Christians, and some leading Nazis who turned against Hitler only in the face of Germany's impending defeat. It is among this last group in fact that the exhibit finds its greatest heroes: the conservative military officers who failed in their attempt to assassinate Hitler on July 20, 1944. But, despite their opposition to the führer, most of them were anti-democratic and imperialist, and many were anti-Semites. At the war's end, this group sought to prevent the Allies from obtaining an unconditional surrender; they wanted a settlement that would have returned to Germany her colonies and kept her as the dominant force in Central Europe. Virtually none of this appears in the exhibit.

Most tendentious is the show's effort to link anti-Hitler activity with the origins of the postwar West German government. "The people who bore political responsibility in Germany following the war," the closing panels declare, "experienced a solidarity during the days of persecution.... It was their wish that tolerance, brotherly love, pluralism and human dignity" shape postwar Germany. In fact, the shape of postwar West Germany was determined by the Allied occupation and especially by the United States. The show also neglects to mention this fact.

As for Protestant and Catholic resistance, the distinguished University of California, Berkeley historian F. L. Carsten has written that "the conciliatory and equivocal attitude adopted by the churches is one of the darkest chapters of the history of the Third Reich." You'd never know that from this exhibit. Nor do you learn much about working-class opposition to Hitler, which, Carsten writes, was "one of the few positive features in German history" during that era. The Communist Party lost more members to Gestapo and S.S. terror than any other party. But the exhibit minimizes its activities in deference to those politicians who don't want Communists considered part of the resistance.

Although this show is not the first attempt to tell Americans about anti-Hitler Germans, previous events were considerably more critical. Willy Brandt spoke at a symposium at Goethe House in New York in 1988. "I cannot hide the reservations I have had—and continue to have—with regard to the use of the inflated term 'resistance movement'," he said. While there was some "opposition" to Hitler in Germany, he continued, "there was very little resistance deserving the name." Other members of that symposium maintained that the term should not be applied to private acts, such as listening to the BBC, or to opposition to particular policies of the Hitler regime, such as the criticism by some churchmen of Nazi euthanasia policies. "Resistance," Brandt and others argued, should be used only to describe public challenges to the regime that sought the end of Nazi rule. With that definition, this show would have been considerably smaller.

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comparison. But the Holocaust remains unique for two primary reasons. It was the only time in recorded history that a state tried to destroy an entire people, regardless of an individual's age, sex, location, profession or belief. And it is the only instance in which the perpetrators conducted this genocide for no ostensible material, territorial or political gain.

The reductio ad absurdum of Facing History's fast-and-loose comparative approach comes in the section on American racism. Discussing the way African Americans have responded to centuries of prejudice and discrimination, it singles out Louis Farrakhan for "speaking directly to the pain and pride" felt by many black Americans. Other than a fleeting acknowledgment that "parts" of Farrakhan's message "stereotype and demean other groups," however, there is no mention of the fact that Farrakhan's modus operandi of speaking to African American pain is to engage in traditional anti-Semitism. Farrakhan, who has spoken of Hitler as a "great man," achieves his rhetorical ends by scapegoating Jews. To find him cited as a reasonable response to racism in a curriculum on moral education and the Holocaust can at best be described as bizarre. One can only assume that Facing History's authors so wanted their curriculum to be used by as wide an audience as possible that they fell prey to the same tendency they are anxious to eradicate: rationalizing evil.

Facing History wants study of the Holocaust to lead students to examine their own lives. That is a commendable effort, particularly on the high school level. A visit to the Holocaust Museum or time spent immersed in a curriculum on the Holocaust *should* make a student both knowledgeable and different. And, as someone who teaches about the Holocaust, it would be disingenuous for me not to acknowledge that some of the objectives I have for my courses are quite similar to Facing History's: making my students more sensitive to ethnic and religious hatred, cognizant that "little" prejudices can easily be transformed into far more serious ones and inclined to speak out about injustice when they confront it. But students must draw their own comparisons. I teach the particulars. I let the students apply them to their own universe. They never fail to do so.

Watching Claude Lanzmann's epic documentary *Shoah* in my Holocaust history class, the students did not learn only about the Holocaust. As they listened to contemporary Poles decry the fate of the Jews and then, using imagery from the New Testament, seamlessly slip into explanations of why this was really the Jews' fault, the student sitting next to me groaned, "Blaming the victim. Again." My students recognized both the particular and universal component of what they had seen. For me, the most moving responses came from the Christian students in the class who spoke about the challenge of reconciling what they consider to be a religion of love with the history of contempt which they now recognized as intrinsic to it. I did not have to spell this out. They did so on their own.

Moreover, there are ways to draw the connection between anti-Semitism and other forms of intolerance without resorting to specious arguments. One need only look at the Nazis' theories of racial hierarchy. While the intention to annihilate Jews and Judaism was at the heart of Nazi ideology, Jews were not the sole objects of hatred. Gypsies and blacks were among those relegated to the category of detestable *Untermenschen*. When Jesse Owens won his medals at the 1936 Olympics, German "medical authorities" suggested that the only way Americans had managed to win was by bringing black athletes whose muscular qualities made them closer to animals in their racial makeup than to whites. Though Nazi racial policy toward the Gypsies was ambivalent—some Gypsies were imprisoned under horrendous conditions, some annihilated at Auschwitz, and others left unmolested—it is an integral part of the story of the Holocaust. German homosexuals were imprisoned because they failed to "serve the reproductive process" and to ensure the "continued existence of the *Volk*." The disabled and the mentally ill were the first ones into the gas chambers. They were the guinea pigs and, but for the protests of some Germans, more of them might have been killed.

The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum represents the most significant proof I know of that it is possible to make the Holocaust relevant without relativizing. This is one of the reasons for its incredible success. I've heard a number of stories about the reactions of some of the 3.5 million people who have visited the museum since it opened in 1993. There was the group of black children, who after seeing the bench in the children's exhibit marked "For Jews Only" remarked, "Oh, just like drinking fountains in the South." The educator guiding them through the exhibit said, "Yes, but not exactly." By the time they reached the end, the children knew how it was the same and how it was different. Kids will generally make the connections. Teachers must help them make the distinctions.

When a non-Jewish mother who was accompanying her young son through the exhibit reached the part of the exhibit devoted to Christian rescuers, she turned to him and said, "If we had been there this is what our family would have done." Her optimistic certitude aside, in that small interchange her child learned something about the responsibility of the bystander and, even more significantly, about his mother's expectations for herself and for him.

Teachers of the Holocaust and writers of curricula on the topic must be scrupulously careful of imparting the message that at its heart the Holocaust is just one in a long string of inhumanities and that every ethnic slur has in it the seeds of a Holocaust. There are important distinctions to be made, and Facing History and Ourselves, in its ambitious attempt to engage in moral education by teaching about the Holocaust, at times obscures more than it reveals. Had Professor Jeffrey and her cohorts seriously studied this text instead of behaving like the Three Stooges of academic evaluation they might have been able to offer constructive criticism of a valiant but often misguided effort. •

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BOOKS & The Arts

Stanley Kauffmann on Films

Women's Ways

O François Truffaut, thou art mighty yet! Here is a new French film in which: the nurses in a maternity ward waltz dreamily in the hospital corridor with infants in their arms; scenes are replayed in a way that a participant would have preferred; a young woman's first sight of a handsome young man is shown in slow motion; private thoughts on the soundtrack counterpoint conversations; a choric character occasionally addresses the camera; a spotlight irises out on a character. And there's more—all reminders of the late 1950s when Truffaut and colleagues burst upon us in the New Wave.

Let's be glad of the reminders, say I. **Mina Tannenbaum** (New Yorker) is the feature debut of a gifted writer-director, Martine Dugowson, who treats these New Wavelets with such delight and surge that she seems an inheritor, not an imitator. Her own delicacy, her wit and insight are so clear that she seems exactly the right artist to advance the sector of film possibility first opened by Truffaut & Co.

Dugowson's film could have been called *Mina and Ethel.* Mina T. is born on the same day as Ethel Bénégui in 1958 in a Paris hospital. These two Jewish girls meet in a ballet class when they are children and, through childhood escapades and quarrels, incisively yet lightly handled, they become fast friends. Their friendship is the gist of what we see, as they move through the years into their 30s. Boys occur, then men. Professions arrive—painting for Mina, journalism for Ethel. Their friendship serves as a bond and sometimes a barrier between them, but it cuts much deeper than they or we have realized. The ending of the story is as shocking and almost as retrospectively deepening, as the ending of *Jules and Jim.*

The mutations of affectation and irritation between them are set in a context of Parisian Jewish life in the postwar years. Mina's mother, a camp survivor, won't allow her daughter's young German acquaintances into their home in the 1970s. Ethel's mother, on her deathbed, plagues her daughter yet again about getting a Jewish husband. If Dugowson doesn't explore the milieu the way that Claude Berri and Diane Kurys have done, her family touches are warm with authenticity.

Neither high drama nor intimate comedy is the point of *Mina Tannenbaum,* though it has some of the former and much of the latter. Like a lot of good fiction and some good films, its purpose is texture, not plot. Dugowson has such understanding of her people, such *faith* in them, that she makes us feel lucky to accompany these two young women through the years. There are two moments I could have done without, fantasies with clips of Rita Hayworth and Bette Davis. These jokes seem too facile for Dugowson's subtle touch. Otherwise she says much with little—as for instance the last glimpse of Mina in fetal position.

Dugowson is excellently helped by the six players of her two leading roles. The four children who play the girls, first at 5 and then at 10, have charm, especially the bespectacled Mina who suggests a J.D. Salinger child. But the real weight, of course, falls to the adults. Romane Bohringer, who had the title role in *The Accompanist* a few years back, is Mina, and she proves again that she is one kind of invaluable film player: she convinces us of emotional storms and peaks more with inner truth than outer sign (the kind of actress that Isabelle Huppert would like to be). Elsa Zylberstein, the Ethel, is more traditional, and finely so: she expresses more than she conceals, but always with color and truth. Bohringer's and Zylberstein's approaches to acting fit the two women they are playing, so Dugowson has cast her film well.

Boys on the Side (Warner Bros.), which is also about women friends, overflows with plot. The screenplay by Don Roos is about three women of very different kinds whom fate and Roos have brought together. One is Whoopi Goldberg, a down-market club singer in New York who wants to get to California as cheaply as possible. Another is Mary-Louise Parker, a real-estate agent who wants to try her luck in California, has a car and advertises for a co-driver. Goldberg answers, calls Parker the whitest person she has ever seen, yet joins up. In Pittsburgh they stop over—briefly, they think—to visit a friend of Goldberg's, Drew Barrymore, the mate of a drug dealer who batters her. Incidents in Pittsburgh put Barrymore in the car with the other two women, headed west.

Add that Goldberg is a lesbian, Parker has AIDS and Barrymore has a homicide charge hanging over her, and we can see that *Thelma & Louise* has been amplified exponentially, and not just by raising the membership 50 percent. Goldberg gets a

FILMS WORTH SEEING

The Madness of King George. *Sparkling dialogue, polished acting, dazzling directing. The mad English king's eighteenth-century court as a microcosm of timeless politicking and intrigue. (Reviewed 1/30/95)* **Miami Rhapsody.** *In this very entertaining debut by writer-director David Frankel, a well-to-do Miami Jewish family encounters contemporary sex, including romps with a black fashion model and a male Cuban nurse.* **Tsahal.** *The title is an acronym for Israeli Defense Forces. Claude Lanzmann's five-hour documentary is overlong, but it vividly dramatizes the unique relationship of Israelis with their military. (2/13/95)* **Window to Paris.** *A Russian fantasy. People in St. Petersburg step through a window right into central Paris—with excitement and some regret. Witty, graceful, trenchant. (2/27/95)*—**SK**

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chance, by actions rather than argument, to make a case for lesbians. Parker gets a major chance to suffer and die. (Since the character herself is of little interest, the devolution is less involving than Tom Hanks's in *Philadelphia.*) And Barrymore, a hedonistic flibbertigibbet, is straightened out by the love of a good man—a policeman, as it happens—in Tucson, where it all ends up.

The entire film feels like the result of a market study. Tests were held (it seems) to determine which problems would have the most audience-grab, particularly when combined with two other problems. Tears are meant to be jerked, but meaningless though tears often are, they are slow to come for this contraption.

Goldberg apparently specifies in her contracts that her character must be error-free—or, if she does make a mistake, it's not her fault—and must be Earth-Mother sagacious. Parker's twisty clown mouth gets twisted some more in various ways. Barrymore has brio and a good heart under the featherhead, so she easily holds up her corner of the triangle.

Herbert Ross, who directed, started life as a ballet dancer and choreographer. His first film work, in 1954, was choreography; he directed the first of his twenty-five films in 1963. His career has been more notable for good craftsmanship than for the extraordinary, with a few exceptions such as *The Seven Per Cent Solution* (1976), an effervescent joint adventure of Sigmund Freud and Sherlock Holmes. But the preeminent aspect of Ross's directing is its unreliability: there's no style or prevailing taste to depend on. *Boys on the Side*, of which he is also a producer, is the work of a competent hand on the assembly line.

Publications Note. Belatedly I've come across a book published in 1992 on the grave subject of film preservation—*Nitrate Won't Wait* by Anthony Slide (McFarland & Co., Box 611, Jefferson, NC 28640, 240 pp., $41.50). Slide, a prolific author on a wide range of film subjects, here concentrates on the history of efforts to preserve films in this country, especially those made before 1950 that are on the frighteningly impermanent nitrate stock.

He details the archival work that has been done in this country and compares it with the work in some other countries. He underscores the urgency and the need for funds, but he is candid enough to say: "The major problem facing film preservationists in the 1990s is one of selectivity." It's easy, relatively, to find money for the preservation of outstanding films, but what about all the rest? Isn't the problem of selection essentially cruel, even barbarous? What librarian of a major library would want the responsibility of preserving some books and consigning the others to oblivion?

A new quarterly, *Scenario*, is subtitled *The Magazine of Screenwriting Art* (3200 Tower Oaks Blvd., Rockville, MD 20852; $20 a copy, $59.95 a year in the United States). Thus its purpose is patent. The first issue, handsomely produced, contains the complete screenplays of *Four Weddings and a Funeral* by Richard Curtis, *The Silence of the Lambs* by Ted Tally, *Nashville* by Joan Tewkesbury and *Bernard and Huey*, an unproduced screenplay by Jules Feiffer. (The next issue will include *Groundhog Day*, *Five Easy Pieces* and *What Happened Was.*) Each screenplay is accompanied by an informative interview with its author. Each is illustrated, not with photos but with original artwork. Feiffer of course did his own.•

The unreal world of Cornel West.

All and Nothing at All

BY LEON WIESELTIER

I.

Where are the public intellectuals? The question is asked everywhere in America, but it is not merely an American question. It has been a long time, after all, since calm was preferred to crisis as the proper mood of the mind. For the Marxist tradition in particular, crisis is all there is, and calm is only crisis denied. Modern intellectuals roil to be real. Why think, if nothing is breaking up and nothing is breaking down, if intellectuals (or "cultural workers," as Cornel West likes to call them) cannot become public intellectuals? And then history obliges, and the crisis comes, and the comedy of the public intellectual begins. It is not in the absence of crisis that he cannot think. It is in the presence of crisis that he cannot think. Things start breaking up and things start breaking down, and the public intellectual cannot exceed his conventions and his vocabularies and his projects. The public intellectual begins to seem like nothing more than a person who is smart in public.

Or so is the case of Cornel West. Since there is no crisis in America more urgent than the crisis of race, and since there is no intellectual in America more celebrated for his consideration of the crisis of race, I turned to West, and read his books. They are almost completely worthless. The man who wrote them is a good man, an enemy of enmity; but he is, as he writes again and again, for "a better world." Who is not? And who, at this late date in the history of the attempt to better the world generally, and to better the world of what West calls "America's chocolate cities" specifically, can still use this expression without irony, or without an anxiety about the degradation of idealism?

West's work is noisy, tedious, slippery (in *The American Evasion of Philosophy*, "evasion" is a term of praise, a description of an accomplishment), sectarian, humorless, pedantic and self-endeared. His judgment of ideas is eccentric. He observes that "black America has yet to produce a great literate intellectual with the exception of Toni Morrison"; that "Marx and Emerson herald self-realization and promote democracy"; that Trilling had a "relaxed prose" and "a famous conversational style"; that "Marxist thought becomes even more relevant after the collapse of communism in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe than it was before"; that "World War II was a major setback for anti-imperialist struggles in black America"; that "intersubjectivity is the go-cart of individuality"; that "Malcolm X moved toward a more Marxist-informed humanist position just prior to his assassination"; that "crack is the postmodern drug"; that "the classical Marxist critique of religion is not an a priori rejection of religion"; and so on.

West's eccentricity is surpassed by West's vanity. In a survey of "contemporary Afro-American social thought," he concludes that "my attempt to put flexible Marxist analysis on the agenda

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of the black churches is a pioneering endeavor." The twelfth verse of the sixth chapter of the gospel of John ("He said unto his disciples, gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost") puts him in mind of his own essays and book reviews, and he assembles them in a book called *Prophetic Fragments*. He likes to compare himself to the prophets: "I am a prophetic Christian freedom fighter," he writes, from his station at a "ruling class institution like Princeton," and his collections of interviews and occasional pieces are called *Prophetic Reflections* and *Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times*. "Like both Russian novelists and blues singers," he allows, "I stress the concrete lived experience of despair and tragedy." And "the brief yet gallant struggle to make Oklahoma an all-black (and red) state" was

> a failed quest that produced ... the legendary "free mind" of black Oklahomans associated with black towns like Muskogee, Boley, and Langston, and with such black natives as Ralph Ellison, John Hope Franklin, Charlie Christian, the Gap Band, and, I humbly add, myself.

He applauds his origins for imbuing him with "ego-deflating humility." His parents and his siblings write the introductions to his works. He appears on the cover of a book in a three-piece suit and in its third chapter he proclaims that "the Victorian three-piece suit—with a clock and chain in the vest—worn by W.E.B. Du Bois ... dignified his sense of intellectual vocation, a sense of rendering service by means of critical intelligence," unlike "the shabby clothing worn by most black intellectuals these days," which "symbolize[s] their utter marginality behind the walls of academe."

And yet the brother is no stranger to ivy, at least mentally. "I am continually caught in a kind of 'heteroglossia,'" he confesses,

> speaking a number of English languages in radically different contexts. When it comes to abstract, theoretical reflection, I employ Marx, Weber, Frankfurt theorists, Foucault, and so on. When it comes to speaking with the black masses, I use Christian narratives and stories, a language meaningful to them but filtered through and informed by intellectual developments from de Tocqueville to Derrida. When it comes to the academy itself there is yet another kind of language, abstract but often atheoretical, since social theorizing is mostly shunned; philosophers are simply ill-equipped to talk about social theory: they know Wittgenstein but not Weber, they know J.L. Austin but not Marx.

West's books are monuments to the devastation of a mind by the squalls of theory. He complains that "academicist forms of expression have a monopoly on intellectual life," that black scholars "imitate the dominant paradigms elevated by fashionable Northeastern seaboard institutions of higher learning," but he is himself such an imitator, and he is almost wholly undone by his own academicism.

West's most recent book, *Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America*, is a perfect document of the thrill of turgidity that characterizes the humanities of the day. It is a lifeless book, and it abounds in sentences such as this one:

> Following the model of the black diasporan traditions of music, athletics, and rhetoric, black cultural workers must constitute and sustain discursive and institutional networks that deconstruct earlier modern black strategies for identity-formation, demystify power relations that incorporate class, patriarchal, and homophobic biases, and construct more multivalent and multidimensional responses that articulate the complexity and diversity of black practices in the modern and postmodern world.

Or this one:

> My view neither promotes a post-Marxian idealism (for it locates acceptable genealogical accounts in material social practices), nor supports an explanatory nihilism (in that it posits some contingent yet weighted set of social practices as decisive factors to explain a given genealogical configuration, that is, set of events). More pointedly, my position appropriates the implicit pragmatism of Nietzsche for the purposes of a deeper, and less dogmatic, historical materialist analysis.

Such a marriage of populism and esoterism is a common characteristic of the academic left. West's sentences are not altogether meaningless. But their meanings are not for you, even if they will eventually set you free. The aim of West's deeper and less dogmatic historical materialist analysis, of course, is action. You remember. Philosophers have for too long thought about the world. The time has come to change it. But with words such as these? The obscurity of this language is not what offends. What offends is the confidence that the established order will eventually fall before this language. Scholasticism is a noble calling, but it leaves the world as it found it. There is not a drug dealer in America who will give himself up to Deleuze and Guattari.

Keeping Faith: Philosophy and Race in America
(Routledge, 319 pp., $19, $16.95 paper)

Race Matters
(Beacon Press, 105 pp., $15)

Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism. Volume One: Prophetic Thought in Postmodern Times
(Common Cause Press, 205 pp., $14.95 paper)

Beyond Eurocentrism and Multiculturalism. Volume Two: Prophetic Reflections: Notes on Race and Power in America
(Common Cause Press, 244 pp., $14.95 paper)

Prophetic Fragments
(William Eerdmans Publishing Co., 294 pp., $14.99 paper)

The American Evasion of Philosophy: A Genealogy of Pragmatism
(University of Wisconsin Press, 279 pp., $16.95 paper)

The Ethical Dimension of Marxist Thought
(Monthly Review Press, 183 pp., $36, $18 paper)

If crisis requires anything, it is clarity; but West's conception of the intellectual vocation is too complicated for clarity. The black intellectual, according to West, must resist "the Booker T. Temptation," which is a "preoccupation with the mainstream and legitimizing power," and "the Talented Tenth Seduction," which is "a move toward arrogant group insularity," and the "Go It Alone Option," which is a "rejectionist perspective that shuns the mainstream and group solidarity." The black intellectual must become a "Critical Organic Catalyst." "By this I mean a person who stays attuned to the best of what the mainstream has to offer—its paradigms, viewpoints, and methods—yet maintains a grounding in affirming and enabling subcultures of criticism." Sounds fine; and Martin Luther King Jr. was, in West's account, the realization of the Gramscian fantasy.

The problem is that the union of theory and practice, in West's hands, becomes a union of pomposity and enthusiasm, a long saga of positioning. And so we get affirmations such as this one: "Rorty's historicist turn was like music to my ears —nearly as sweet as the Dramatics, The Spinners, and The Main Ingredient, whom I then listened to daily for sanity." West skips undialectically from the seminar to the street, celebrating his connectedness. This has ridiculous results. "Although the Christian quest for transcendent meaning in life and history is rejected in Prince's lyrics," he declares, "the idea of divine intervention in the form of eschatological catastrophic presence is observed"; and it does not escape his notice that "the agapic praxis of communities" was abandoned in the late work of Marvin Gaye, and that a change in the image of the Temptations "could not give Motown hegemonic status on fast funk."

Tracing the evolution of jazz from

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Charlie Parker to Grover Washington, West has not a word to say about decline; and he insists that there is an essential relationship between jazz and democracy, concluding *Race Matters* with a tribute to "the jazz freedom fighter."

> I use the term "jazz" here not so much as a term for a musical art form, as for a mode of being in the world, an improvisational mode of protean, fluid, and flexible dispositions toward reality suspicious of "either/or" viewpoints. . . .

It is true that the materials of jazz were not discovered at the court of the Esterhazys; but the rest is sentimentality. Improvisation in jazz is not a release from structure, and structure in jazz is not an experience of oppression. Jazz is no more democratic than any other art. It is governed, like all art, by an either/or: either you do it well or you don't.

But West is a politicizer. In *Keeping Faith*, there appears this extraordinary passage:

> The repoliticizing of the black working poor and underclass should focus primarily on the black cultural apparatus, especially the ideological form and content of black popular music. African American life is permeated by black popular music. Since black musicians play such an important role in African American life, they have a special mission and responsibility: to present beautiful music which both sustains and motivates black people and provides visions of what black people should aspire to. Despite the richness of the black musical tradition and the vitality of black contemporary music, most black musicians fall far short of this crucial mission and responsibility. There are exceptions—Gil Scott-Heron, Brian Jackson, Stevie Wonder, Kenneth Gamble and Leon Huff—but more political black popular music is needed. . . . Black activists must make black musicians accountable in some way to the urgent needs and interests of the black community.

Agit-pop!

This is not Stalinism. This is silliness. But it is silliness of a particular kind, which brings us to the matter of what West really believes.

II.

I am not a prophet and not the son of a prophet, said the prophet. The professor is not so circumspect. He calls his work prophetic. His point of regard could not be more unprophetic: he is a historicist, and the prophets were the early enemies of historicism, who chastised the temporal in the name of the eternal; but he is not deterred. West's writings are really tiresome on the subject of their own prophetic-ness. Of his view of the world, he writes that

> I have dubbed it "prophetic" in that it harks back to the Jewish and Christian tradition of prophets who brought urgent and compassionate critique to bear on the evils of their day. The mark of the prophet is to speak the truth in love with courage—come what may.

And:

> The synoptic vision I accept is a particular kind of prophetic Christian perspective which comprehensively grasps and enables opposition to existential anguish, socio-economic, cultural and political oppression and dogmatic modes of thought and action.

And:

> Prophetic criticism . . . begins with social structural analyses [but] it also makes explicit its moral and political aims. It is partisan, partial, engaged and crisis-centered, yet always keeps open a skeptical eye to avoid dogmatic traps, premature closures, formulaic formulations or rigid conclusions.

It would be hard to exaggerate West's satisfaction with his spiritual temperament.

There is a modern view of prophecy in the Bible according to which it was fundamentally a political vocation, a fierce and founding style of social criticism; and West's propheticism is just another instance of that view.

> The moral vision and ethical norms I accept are derived from the prophetic Christian tradition. I follow the biblical injunction to look at the world through the eyes of its victims, and the Christocentric perspective which requires that one see the world through the lens of the Cross—and thereby see our relative victimizing and relative victimization. Since we inhabit different locations on the existential, socioeconomic, cultural and political scales, our victim status differs, though we all, in some way, suffer. Needless to say, the more multilayered the victimization, the more suffering one undergoes. And given the predominant forms of life-denying forces in the world, the majority of humankind experiences thick forms of victimization.

There are victims. This is not a matter of controversy. The harshness of the world, and the human responsibility for a large measure of its harshness, cannot be gainsaid. But the Bible did not prescribe that we look at the world through the eyes of its victims. It prescribed that we seek justice. That is not the same thing; but West is dead to the difference. He is a hero in a culture of morbidity, in which wounds are jewels. And his appropriation of what he calls "the Christocentric perspective" for the politics of victimization in America is preposterous. It is banal at best,

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and it is blasphemous at worst, to describe the crucifixion of Jesus as victimization, in the sense in which we recognize victimization. No road runs from Calvary to the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Why is West a Christian? He gives two reasons. The first reason is "on the existential level." The Christian tradition helps him to understand "the crises and traumas of life," to overcome sensations of "deep emptiness and pervasive meaningless." The second reason is "on the political level." It is that "the culture of the wretched of the earth is religious." "To be religious," he writes,

> permits oneself to devote one's life to accenting the prophetic and progressive potential within those traditions that shape the everyday practices and deeply held perspectives of most oppressed peoples. What a wonderful privilege and vocation this is!

Historically, this is bizarre. The story of the alliance of religion with power is a long and miserable story. Religion has animated oppression as much as it has animated the resistance to oppression. What some of West's favorite theologians like to call "liberation" has often taken the form of secularization; and it is not difficult to understand that the threat to one's faith has been preferred to the threat to one's life.

Not that West is unaware of the grisly past. But this is how he treats it:

> On the one hand, I assume that religious traditions are, for the most part, reactionary, repressive, and repulsive without heavy doses of modern formulations of rule of law, gender and racial equality, tolerance, and especially substantive democracy. On the other hand, such modern formulations can be based on or derived from the best of religions.

This is even more bizarre. It is true that there are elements of tolerance in all the monotheistic faiths, but the elements of intolerance are more numerous; a religion that is based on a revelation is a religion based on an ideal of exclusiveness, which is not an ideal of democracy. And what sort of faith is it that finds religion "repulsive" without a particular politics, and locates "the best of religions" in their approximations to social democracy?

And what if the wretched of the earth were unbelievers? I don't mean to remind anybody of Pilate, but what is truth? "Of course," West murmurs, "the fundamental philosophical question remains whether the Christian gospel is ultimately true." Of course. But West is a postmodern man. His faith is proudly unexercised by the question of truth. For the question has been settled. There is no truth. There are only truths. This has been established, he thinks, by Richard Rorty, and more generally by the repudiation of traditional metaphysics in Anglo-American philosophy.

West writes glowingly of "the historicist turn in the philosophy of religion," which banished from the temple "all modes of philosophical reflection which invoke ahistorical quests for certainty and transhistorical searches for foundations." He describes himself as a "prophetic pragmatist," by which he means a Christian who believes in the gospel according to John Dewey, for whom there are no stable and lasting essences, no self and no world except the self and the world that we create, no invisible reality at the end of visible reality, no expression of the human spirit that refers to anything more than its experience.

There are no arguments in West's discussion of these matters. He is not a philosopher, he is a cobbler of philosophies; and so he reports the pragmatist and historicist tidings and proceeds to the manufacture of what he needs. "To put it bluntly," he concludes, "I do hope that the historicist turn in philosophy of religion enriches the prophetic Christian tradition and enables us to work more diligently for a better world." To put it bluntly, he will be disappointed. The Christian tradition will not be enriched by a faith for which God is not real. Before what, exactly, does the postmodernist bow his head? For the anti-essentialist, what kingdom is at hand? Rorty claims that the abolition of transcendence is necessary for liberalism, but West claims that the abolition of transcendence is necessary for religion. He does not see that his position is a dire contradiction. "Prophetic pragmatism" is not rich and revolutionary, it is indulgent and impossible. He can have the prophets or he can have the pragmatists, he can have truth or he can have truths, but he cannot have both. (It was Pilate who spoke in the voice of the pragmatist.)

West's model of the "prophetic Christian as organic intellectual," again, is Martin Luther King Jr. But the authority to which King appealed was not the authority of "social and heterogeneous narratives which account for the present and project a future"; and when he demanded that justice run down as waters and righteousness as a mighty stream, he was not calling America to "critique." The moral and political force of King, and the struggle for civil rights from Harper's Ferry to Selma, was owed to the certainty that some things are absolutely true or absolutely false, absolutely good or absolutely evil. King was religious, but West, at least in his writings, is religiose. What summons him to faith in God is not the object of the faith, but its social utility. He resembles, in this regard, many of the conservatives whom he despises.

III.

For the purpose of grasping West's politics, there is no better summary than this paragraph, written less than a decade ago, in an essay called "Critical Theory and Christian Faith." It is long, but it is special.

> Industrial capitalism, with its nightwatchman state and its military-like organizations, boasted of its overt racist practices such as its Jim Crowism against people of African descent in the Diaspora and in Africa, its exclusionary immigration laws against Asians, imperial conquest and geographical containment of Mexican and indigenous peoples; it promoted its cult of *domesticity to privatize the role and function* of heterosexual women and banish the presence of lesbian women; and it valorized the doctrine of masculinity which degraded "effeminate" heterosexual and gay man. Monopoly capitalism, with its interventionist state and bureaucratic administration, tempered its racist practices and refined its racist ideologies against people of color—yet nearly committed genocide against Jewish peoples [sic] in the midst of "civilized" Europe; celebrated omnifunctional women who worked double loads in the public and private spheres; castigated lesbians and recloseted gay men. Multinational corporate capitalism, with its bankrupt and authoritarian-like state and administrative-intensive workforce, turns its principal racist ammunition on the black and brown working poor and underclass; focuses its right-wing (or restorative) movements on women's reproductive rights; and often poses lesbians and gays as mere cultural scapegoats. The recent fanning of the social logics of white, male, and heterosexual supremacist discourses and practices in the Americanization and Sovietization of the world further deform and debilitate public life because these logics attempt to make this sphere the possession of primarily white heterosexual elites—or those who emulate them, from Margaret Thatcher to Clarence Pendleton Jr.

Industrial capitalism, monopoly capitalism, multinational corporate capitalism: these are the categories that West cherishes for the analysis of American life.

West's published work is an endless exercise in misplaced Marxism. Philosophically, his desire is to demonstrate that "Marx's turn toward history resembles the anti-foundationalist argument of the American pragmatists," but no such demonstration is provided, and

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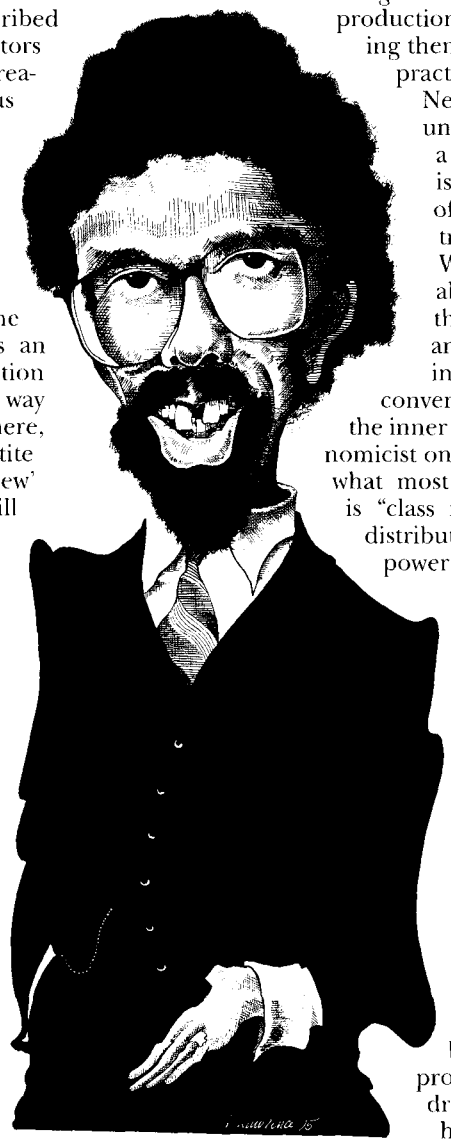
anyway the resemblance is largely a measure of West's desire. Otherwise he seeks to devise a Marxist ground for American grievances, and in this, alas, he succeeds brilliantly.

There is something puerile about West's Marxism; it is too much fun. He writes like a man who refuses to accept the fact that he was born too late for a particular excitement. Instead he produces little mimicries of the Marxist tradition, such as the essay called "Toward a Socialist Theory of Racism," which promises to furnish the proper theory of *modes of European domination* and *forms of European subjugation* and *types of European exploitation and repression.* The italics, needless to say, are his own. In 1985 he writes, and in 1988 he reprints, this exhortation to black Americans: "The relative unity and strength of our capitalist foes requires that we must come together if our struggle is to win!" The urgency is matched by the unreality. But this is true of all doctrine.

It is hard to read West's description of, say, the Black Panthers as "the leading black lumpenproletarian revolutionary party in the sixties" without recalling Trotsky's oration to the "workers and peasants of the South Bronx." But not all of West's progressivism is quite so charming.

> The most crucial brute fact about the American terrain is that the U.S.A. began as a liberal capitalist nation permeated with patriarchal oppression and based, in large part, upon a slave economy.
>
> The basic difference between the Americanization and the Sovietization of the world is that the U.S.A. was born with a precious rhetoric of rights.... This heritage remains a valuable source for the renewal of public life in countries under the influence of the U.S.A. and USSR.
>
> The most significant theme of the new cultural politics of difference is the agency, capacity and ability of human beings who have been culturally degraded, politically oppressed and economically exploited by bourgeois liberal and communist illiberal status quos.
>
> The profound tragedy of the epochal change in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe may be ... a kind of global erasure of egalitarian and democratic concern for jobs, food, shelter, literacy and health care. This would mean that along with the unleashing of capitalist market forces on an international scale goes an unleashing of despair for those caught within or concerned about the world's ill-fed, ill-clad, and ill-housed.

None of this awfulness would matter *much, except that it informs West's* opinions on the subject of race in America, and those opinions are loose in the land. It is impossible to understand the depth of West's contempt for the black middle class, for example, without understanding the depth of his contempt for capitalism. The emergence of a black middle class as a consequence of the civil rights revolution is, for West, a phenomenon without dignity. It signifies, in his view, "the new class divisions produced by black inclusion (and exclusion)." Throughout his writings, the men and the women of the black middle class are described as heartless collaborators with the market, creatures of "conspicuous consumption and hedonistic indulgence," who have abandoned their political responsibility. "Black entree into the culture of consumption," he scolds, "made status an obsession and addiction to stimulation a way of life." And elsewhere, "Like any other petite bourgeoisie, the 'new' black middle class will most likely pursue power-seeking, promote black entrepreneurial growth, and perpetuate professional advancement."



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

In one of his most troubling utterances, West offers this summary of the recent history of African Americans: "The '60s in African American history witnessed an unforgettable appearance of the black masses on the historical stage, but they are quickly dragged off—killed, maimed, strung out, imprisoned or paid off." Paid off! This, from the burgher on the cover of *Race Matters,* who appears in his finery on a rooftop in East Harlem. West traveled there to be photographed in the neighborhood of those "black masses." He complains that nine taxis refused to take him from Park and 60th to 115th and First. "My blood began to boil," he recalls. A parable of racism. But he suffered the slights of Park and 60th, as he admits a few lines earlier, because "I left my car—a rather elegant one—in a safe parking lot." So the taxis would not take him where he would not take his car! This is not precisely what Gramsci had in mind.

West flatters himself that his Marxism is unorthodox. It is his "basic disagreement with Marxist theory," he says, that "I hold that many social practices, such as racism, are best understood and explained not only or primarily by locating them within modes of production, but also by situating them within the cultural practices of civilizations." Never mind that this unorthodoxy is almost a century old, that it is just another school of Marxism. The truth is that, for all of West's preachments about "nihilism" in the black community, and all his summonings to a "politics of conversion," his analysis of the inner city is mainly an economicist one. West believes that what most ails the inner city is "class inequality," or "the distribution of wealth, and power and income"; and that "visionary progressives must always push for substantive redistributive measures," even if "every redistributive measure is a compromise with and concession from the caretakers of American prosperity." For "without jobs and [economic] incentives to be productive citizens the black poor become even more prone to criminality, drugs and alcoholism."

"Even more prone"? There are many, many black poor who are not prone at all; and the resistance of these people to the forces of social and spiritual disintegration surely gives the lie to the economic analysis of morality, according to which values are an expression of class, and the values of the bourgeoisie are the consequence of the money of the bourgeoisie. (It is hard not to conclude, as one watches illegitimacy acquiring legitimacy in American society, that a little bourgeois morality would go a long way.) It

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flies in the face, moreover, of the determinism that reduces the lives of the miserable to their misery. They're depraved on account of they're deprived: this determinism often masquerades as a form of hope, but it is a form of despair.

West is a dodger on the question of individual responsibility. He resents the "new black conservatives" for making an issue of it. "We indeed must criticize and condemn immoral acts of black people, but we must do so cognizant of the circumstances into which people are born and under which they live. By overlooking these circumstances, the new black conservatives fall into the trap of blaming black poor people for their predicament." This is not a fair account of the views of Shelby Steele, Glenn Loury, Stanley Crouch and others. I do not hear them blaming people for being poor. I hear them blaming people for abandoning families. Their assumption is that the latter is not the result of the former; that men are good husbands and good fathers whether or not there is cash in the bank. And this is finally a philosophical assumption. The discussion of individual responsibility is really a discussion of human agency. There is no way to explain the behavior of good husbands and good fathers, except that they have chosen to be good husbands and good fathers. In their blasted universe, they have exercised the freedom of their will.

And yet the "prophetic Christian freedom fighter" fights those who insist upon the explanation from freedom. West has it backward: we must be cognizant of the circumstances into which black people are born and under which they live, but we must criticize and condemn immoral acts of black people. There is no government agency that can let human agency off the hook. But West, as I say, is a dodger. "It is imperative to steer a course between the Scylla of environmental determinism and the Charybdis of a blaming-the-victims-perspective." Politically, this is plausible. (Pennsylvania Avenue has run between between Scylla and Charybdis for two years now.) Philosophically, this is implausible. Fortune treats us all differently, but moral behavior is not a hostage to bad fortune, even if bad fortune makes immoral behavior sometimes more attractive. We are not all in the same universe socially and economically, but we are all in the same universe morally. Either we are accountable for our actions, or we are not. Either, or.

West's tirelessly preaches reconciliation, between blacks and blacks, between blacks and whites, between blacks and Jews; but intellectual reconciliation is not the same thing as emotional reconciliation, and emotional reconciliation is not the same thing as political reconciliation. His sweetness lands West in all kinds of confusions. Last year he endorsed Al Sharpton's candidacy for the Senate in New York, "his role in the controversial Tawana Brawley case" notwithstanding, because he "could fuse the best of Malcolm X and Martin Luther King Jr." Sharpton, he told the readers of *The Daily News*, was "in process," and Farrakhan, too, was "in process," though Farrakhan "still has far to go to embrace a progressive stance."

Nothing of his own is alien to him. He finds human truths in inhuman lies. In a lecture on "The Black Underclass and Black Philosophers," West suggests that the black community has been transformed by drugs, he says, "whether it's conspiratorial or not." And elsewhere he describes the history of the inner city since the 1960s in this way:

> The repressive state apparatus in American capitalist society jumped at the opportunity to express its contempt for black people. And the basic mechanism of pacifying the erupting black ghettoes—the drug industry—fundamentally changed the character of the black community. The drug industry, aided and abetted by underground capitalists, invaded black communities with intense force, police indifference and political silence. It accelerated black, white-collar and blue-collar working-class suburban flight, and transformed black poor neighborhoods into terrains of human bondage to the commodity form.

The unreality of the theory of the academy meets the unreality of the theory of the street. It is a high price to pay for the tickle of authenticity.

Enough. Cornel West has been called "the preeminent African American intellectual of his generation." This cannot be so. He is a homiletical figure, a socialist divine, who has come to lift the spirits of the progressives. He is forever imploring them, the "progressives of all colors," to come together. But if the progressives of America finally come together, all that will have happened is that the progressives of America will have finally come together. It is obvious only to them that the greatest failure of American society since slavery will stop for them. Terrains of human bondage to the commodity form! From such notions, the nasty world has nothing to fear. Something is happening in our midst that none of us appears to understand. Perhaps we have been asking the wrong question. Where are the private intellectuals? Philosophers have for too long tried to change the world. The time has come to think about it. •

Salvage

My little room in the guesthouse faintly reeks
of the nostrum the caretaker left, an ounce
of "Wind Oil Essence." (The name is a mystery,
even to him.) Head clear, I work into the dusk,
the page under my fingertips cooling to gray.

But my mind has been drifting back all day
to the dormitory across from us, close enough
to cut the sky almost in half, vacant now, agape,
nothing inside, I guess, still worth protecting
from the elements. Bare piping of bed frames; dream

on dream, how many years, flown out and up
into galactic dust, each homesick boy a trail
of breath, a moan—dreadful, they tell me, the winters
in Beijing. Late swallows are working the space
between us.... When he showed me the garden shed,

who was the humbler—he for its squalor,
or I for the honor of seeing it? Such a deep must,
my vision blurred. Then cleared: under a table,
as bright as stolen goods, my balled-up failures,
smoothed out and stacked against the coming cold.

DANIEL HALL

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The Unweary Blues

By Helen Vendler

The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes edited by Arnold Rampersad with David Roessel

(Knopf, 708 pp., $30)

In past years, when I taught the poetry of Langston Hughes (1902-1967), I used the only available selection, one made for Knopf in 1959 by Hughes himself, and reissued in 1990 as a Vintage Classic. It contained, naturally, no poems from Hughes's last two volumes of verse, *Ask Your Mama* (1961) and *The Panther and the Lash* (1967), nor from the earlier *The Dream Keeper* (1932). Hughes had censored out his most controversial poems. I could not point my students to Hughes's allegorical comment on the Scottsboro case, "Christ in Alabama," which begins by addressing the oppressed blacks of the Southern states, modulates into a prayer to God (the "White Master above"), and ends with a description of Christ crucified by a racist South:

> Christ is a nigger,
> Beaten and black:
> Oh, bare your back!
>
> Mary is His mother:
> Mammy of the South,
> Silence your mouth.
>
> God is his father:
> White Master above
> Grant him your love.
>
> Most holy bastard
> Of the bleeding mouth,
> Nigger Christ
> On the cross
> Of the South.

When you consider the genial, resolutely optimistic and humorously ironic character of Hughes's temperament, it is a mark of how desperate he felt that he should write such a poem. Yes, the magazine *Contempo* had solicited from him a comment on the Scottsboro boys (whom Hughes had visited in prison in 1931). Still, nothing but his own judgment made him throw back in the face of the South its own ostentatious "Christianity," a form of that religion which had not heard that God is love. In 1959, without any pressure from Knopf, he soft-pedaled, in his *Selected*, the wild Hughes, the angry Hughes, the convert to Communist beliefs who wrote "Good Morning Revolution" and "Goodbye Christ":

> Goodbye,
> Christ Jesus Lord God Jehova,
> Beat it on away from here now.
> Make way for a new guy with no religion at all—
> A real guy named
> Marx Communist Lenin Peasant Stalin Worker ME.

Maybe Hughes no longer believed in these poems; they are certainly not representative of his best work. Still, it is hard to describe his best work without these poems as foil. At last, in *The Collected Poems of Langston Hughes*, newly edited by Arnold Rampersad and David Roessel, it is possible to see, without laborious work in a major library, just what the career of Langston Hughes, poet, produced.

The *Poems* completes Rampersad's long service to Hughes's memory. Rampersad's earlier splendid two-volume biography of Hughes virtually necessitated a coherent collection of the poetry. What is missing in the chronologically arranged *Poems*, however, is a listing of the table of contents of each of the separate volumes of Hughes's poetry as it was issued. Since books such as *The Weary Blues* or *Fine Clothes for the Jew* represent historically important moments in literary history, it is necessary to know just what poems people had read when they bought or reviewed such volumes. I hope that subsequent editions of the *Poems* will include this indispensable information.

Hughes was by no means only a poet. The list of his works prefaced to this volume is divided into Poetry, Fiction, Drama, Humor, Biography, Autobiography, History, and For Young People, and he should be regarded first and foremost as a multigeneric writer, the sum of his various parts. He is not a major poet, but he is a fascinating, original and disturbing one. He found, early on, a style that served him until the end of his life. His career lacks, therefore, that tenacious struggle to expand expression within poetic genres and poetic language that marks the work of the most ambitious poets.

Yet he wrote scores of genuine poems; and if his pen sometimes descended to propaganda, he was a propagandist who did not produce his work cynically. His idealistic belief in the power of the word to convince others, his faith in the poem as a "proletarian weapon," made Hughes sometimes forget that his own convictions had to be digested poetically before they could do poetic work. Or perhaps he did not forget at all: in his hurried life he may have believed the cause was so urgent that it did not leave him the time for that digestion of thought into style that alone allows poetically successful representation of belief.

Hack propagandists do not know how to write genuine poems; but a genuine poet who writes propaganda (as many have done) engages in a conscious faithlessness to art. Whether that faithlessness is justified by a "higher" or "greater" faith in human rights is a matter for the writer's conscience. Hughes represents the interesting case of a poet who did both sorts of verse concurrently, as though he could justify his hack work by continuing to practice his art at the same time. It is depressing to see a writer turn out boilerplate, but it would be more depressing to see him turn out nothing but boilerplate. During the years in which he was doing his most pedestrian Soviet flag-waving, Hughes also wrote gnomic poems like the famous one called "Personal":

> In an envelope marked:
> *Personal*
> God addressed me a letter.
> In an envelope marked:
> *Personal*
> I have given my answer.

Rampersad's biography of Hughes struggles with these issues. The second volume is prefaced by a statement that Hughes himself made, in 1964: "Politics can be the graveyard of the poet. And only poetry can be his resurrection." Rampersad speaks of Hughes's "compromises," and he does not hesitate to criticize them. Hughes wrote, for instance, a collection of biographical essays called *Famous American Negroes* that left out W.E.B. Du Bois altogether, and Rampersad comments:

> The unkindest cut in his book, and one about which he should have felt a degree of agony, although he never referred to it publicly, was the omission altogether of any reference to the greatest of black intellectuals, W.E.B. Du Bois. In fact, Langston managed to write a chapter about the accommodationist Booker T. Washington without once mentioning his most celebrated antagonist.

Yet Rampersad hastens to add: "Un-

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doubtedly, it was taken for granted by his various publishers that even brief references to Du Bois and other radicals were out of the question in a text aimed at children."

Each such "compromise" has to be weighed in the context of its historical moment. The summer of 1953, when Hughes was putting together those biographical essays, followed Hughes's March appearance under subpoena before Senator McCarthy's committee, where Hughes refused to implicate others and was himself "exonerated." Rampersad criticizes Hughes's actions at the McCarthy hearing, contrasting his "largely passive, perhaps supine" behavior to the "spirited resistance" of Paul Robeson and others. And yet he recognizes that Hughes's evasive response was characteristic of his temperament: "As in the case of his sexuality, he had allowed the expression of his radical political zeal to wither, to atrophy, to evaporate."

No one of us is in a position to say, with moral hindsight, how we would have acted in Hughes's situation. We, too, might have written poems that are, by the standards of art, ignoble. But the appearance of a *Collected Poems* warrants the judging of the poetry as art. Bracketing the conditions of production of the poems, so amply retold in the *Life*—the hateful father, the incompetent mother, the patronizing white "Godmother," the abortive schooling at Columbia, the seafaring years, the graduation from Lincoln University, the conversion to communism, the travels in the Soviet Union and China and Civil War Spain, the scriptwriting in Hollywood, the FBI attacks, the Harlem years, the McCarthy subpoena, the work in journalism, opera and theater, the eventual heap of honors, the death from prostate cancer—we are entitled to ask what sort of poetry Hughes gave us and what lyric became, in his hands, that it was not before.

It is easy to name the literary and musical traditions inspiring Hughes's work. They include Whitman's democratic free verse, the dialect poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar, Sandburg's updating of Whitman, Amy Lowell's imagism, Negro spirituals, the blues, and jazz. Rampersad's biography not only traces most of these, but also weighs their importance. There is less room in the biography for consideration of individual poems, or even for an account of Hughes's poetics. What sort of poetics, for instance, generates a poem such as "Personal"? It is a poetics of announced reciprocity. It always takes two to make a Hughes poem (in this case, God and the poet). But it is a cryptic reciprocity, exchanged in private messages within envelopes marked "Personal." That label means "not to be read by anyone else." The message that God sends Hughes may not be the same message he sends to another American, or another black, or another poet, or another person; and the message Hughes sends back to God may not be the same message he would send to his mother, or to Senator McCarthy, or to the NAACP. Lyric, in this construction, is the message you send to God; and it is your answer to God's message to you—the idiosyncratic fate God has dealt you. If Dickinson said of her poetry, "This is my letter to the world/That never wrote to me," Hughes says, "This is my answer to the God/Who once addressed a destiny to me."

The first reciprocity, then, is the one between personal fate and the personal lyrics responding to that fate. Even the loneliest moment of all in Hughes, the moment of suicide, is represented as a moment of reciprocity:

Suicide's Note

The calm.
Cool face of the river
Asked me for a kiss.

Courtesy Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture

LANGSTON HUGHES IN 1928

The second characteristic of Hughes's verse is the idiosyncrasy of personal identity. The letter from God gave a personal fate, the fate of a single soul; and the fate is the fate of birth, not of current events. To be born a black American male in Kansas is not the same—as Hughes increasingly realized—as to be born a black American female in Harlem, or an African black in Nigeria. Hughes's letter from God was personal to him; and his watchful curiosity about the nature of other, equally personal, fates informs all his best writing. A black writer with a less fluid and multiple conception of identity would not have been able to do such lively social portraiture, would not have been so interested in the Harlem street scene. Someone with a more stereotypical sense of himself as black would not have gotten along so well, or experienced such genuine fellow feeling, as Hughes did in the multiracial cabins of the trading ships he worked on.

Reciprocity and idiosyncrasy could exist in a poetry of only two persons, as they do in the lyrics of George Herbert. But Hughes's poetry—to name a third characteristic of his writing—is inveterately social. There is always an explicit or implicit social (more often than erotic) other. It may be a landlord, or a set of fellow workers, or the nameless "they" of a racist society, or merely an old mule. But the lyric speaker, because he is so conscious of his own separate and idiosyncratic identity, is always aware of the bonds of social relation, happy or unhappy.

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The fourth characteristic of the Hughes poem (at its normative best) is irony. Though irony is always, for the best of reasons, frequent in colloquial talk among the oppressed, it is oddly infrequent in the "high" literature of oppression, which tends toward the melodramatic and the tragic (Stowe, Zola, Hood). Du Bois's famous "double consciousness" of the "souls of black folk" does not necessarily produce irony, though it may produce the doubleness—watching oneself as if one were another—that can become a root of writerly irony. But the sort of humorous irony found everywhere in Hughes depends on the conscious diminution of self, which is precisely the sort of diminution that the role of tragic victim cannot tolerate. When someone else is diminishing you, it is hard to diminish yourself at the same time. Yet true moral defiance lies in refusing the very role of victim, which is always a role conferred by others rather than one self-invented. The invention of a new role, appropriate to one's lowly place in (actual) society but one not determined by society, is an act that Hughes is particularly good at:

Me and the Mule

My old mule,
He's got a grin on his face.
He's been a mule so long
He's forgot about his race.

I'm like that old mule—
Black—and don't give a damn!
You got to take me
Like I am.

The wry humor of this makes one forget, for a beat, the oddity of the mule's having a "race" at all. On reflection, we see that the mule is a product of miscegenation between horse and donkey, yet by now he has become just who he is. His black master does not think himself better than the mule, and he isn't, socially speaking. But neither of them is going to disappear, and sooner or later the world will get used to them. The truth of a humiliated position is not denied. On the contrary, the shot of energy that comes from truth-telling gives the poem its kick.

When Hughes is at his best, irony pokes in to rebuke even denunciation. In his "Memo to Non-White Peoples," he begins in what one might call the paranoid position:

They will let you have dope
Because they are quite willing
To drug you or kill you. . . .

They will let you have alcohol
To make you sodden and drunk
And foolish.

But the truth is that dope and alcohol need some cooperation; and the poem veers from accusation of whites to accusation of blacks:

They will gleefully let you
Kill your damn self any way you choose
With liquor, drugs, or whatever.

Hughes's second thoughts of this sort transform many poems that would otherwise be predictable into wayward human documents. Irony is anathema, of course, to all the true believers Hughes encountered—whether the Klan, the NAACP, the USSR, the FBI or the police—and Hughes gently distanced himself, in the long run, from all comprehensive belief systems, though he was, by nature, a believer. Even when he is writing about being (in his imagination) captured by the Klan, in a poem called "Ku Klux," he shows himself answering questions ironically:

They took me out
To some lonesome place.
They said, "Do you believe
In the great white race?"

I said, "Mister,
To tell you the truth,
I'd believe in anything
If you'd just turn me loose."

The white man said, "Boy,
Can it be
You're a-standin' there
A-sassin' me?"

Sooner or later, Hughes got around to "a-sassin'" every solemnity, especially the solemnity of coerced "belief" common to all religious and political organizations:

They hit me in the head
And knocked me down.
And then they kicked me
On the ground.

A klansman said, "Nigger,
Look me in the face—
And tell me you believe in
The great white race."

Other forms of social coercion are less blatant than the kicks and punches of the Klan, but Hughes's irony mockingly registers them all, together with the hypocrisy underlying them:

Detectives from the vice squad
with weary sadistic eyes
spotting fairies.
Degenerates
some folks say.

But God, Nature,
or somebody
made them that way.

Police lady or Lesbian
over there?
Where?

It seems that the largely asexual Hughes may have had, besides the double consciousness of the black, the double consciousness of the homosexual (though he resisted the advances of homosexuals such as Alain Locke and Countee Cullen, who tried to bring him out). The irony of existing in one otherness that was unconcealable—blackness—and one otherness that was hidden—homosexuality—made Hughes ultimately suspicious of all visible social surfaces. His lifelong loneliness made him a watcher of that vivid Harlem life in which he could not fully participate, whether as a member of the moralistic churchgoing set or as a participant in the far more careless street culture. What he could do was feel the feelings of both, and represent life having its way with both, as in his poem about "illegitimacy" called "S-sss-ss-sh!":

Nature has a way
Of not caring much
About marriage
Licenses and such.

But the neighbors
And her mother
Cared very much!

The baby came one morning,
Almost with the sun.

The neighbors—
And its grandma—
Were outdone!

But mother and child
Thought it fun.

It is evident from all these poems that Hughes's poetics is a poetics of the common tongue. Most of his poems are accessible to anyone who can read, and even the more allusive ones generally mention events that were, at the time, in the daily newspapers. Needless to say, Hughes was superbly literate, and had sailed with ease through university humanities courses (including the famous Contemporary Civilization course at Columbia). In choosing to write "simple" poems he excused himself from mastering complex traditional forms and proclaimed himself a follower of those oral traditions that had produced black folksongs and the blues. He even rewrote some of his quatrain-poems into the six-line blues form; and his first book declared, by calling itself *The Weary Blues*, that it was a book of songs as much as a book of poems. The divided self that is evident in the poem "Conservatory Student Struggles with Higher Instrumentation" was perhaps his own:

The saxophone
Has a vulgar tone.
I wish it would
Let me alone.

The saxophone
Is ordinary.

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More than that,
It's mercenary!

The saxophone's
An instrument
By which I wish
I'd never been
Sent!

Whatever "sends" you as a writer is the language you have to write with; and Hughes, with his strong musical sense, "felt" language in short rhythmic pulses. The pentameter appears very rarely in his work, and even the tetrameter is usually, as in the poem above, cut into dimeters. How, we might ask, would the saxophone poem be different if written out as a single six-line stanza in more "normal" English tetrameters?

The saxophone has a vulgar tone.
I wish it would leave me alone.
The saxophone is ordinary.
More than that, it's mercenary!
The saxophone's an instrument
By which I wish I'd never been sent!

Such a "rewrite" destroys the poem as a representation of reluctant thinking by fits and starts. If we read the original poem properly, the line-breaks and the stanza-breaks have to be taken into account as we listen to what the conservatory student is "really" saying:

The saxophone (which I wish I were playing now)
Has a vulgar tone (at least according to the standards of the conservatory)
I wish it would (at least while I'm here taking my lesson)
Let me alone. *(it* is pursuing me, I'm not pursuing it)

The saxophone (let me sternly remind myself)
Is ordinary. (a euphemism; translation: "lower class")
More than that (and even worse)
It's mercenary! (and the conservatory is "above" such things)

The saxophone's (about which I can't stop thinking)
An instrument (so why isn't it taught here at the conservatory?)
By which I wish (but my wish doesn't amount to will)
I'd never been (been what? attracted? degraded?)
Sent! (ecstasy, aesthetic transport, the "wrong" sort of pleasure)

Hughes's poems are, as this example shows, poems of implication. For all their apparent "simplicity," they bear rereading. It is a rare one, among his better poems, that does not carry a scorpion sting in its tail or a spiritual insight in its epigrammatic close. If we do not "fill in the blanks," we miss the point. We are used to filling in the blanks in poems that announce themselves as complex, but in poems that resemble song lyrics we tend to think that what we see at the beginning is what we get, that the impression given by the first stanza will do for the whole. Hughes is quite likely to trip up such an assumption. Here are the first three stanzas of his four-stanza poem "Island":

Wave of sorrow,
Do not drown me now:

I see the island
Still ahead somehow.

I see the island
And its sands are fair:

So far, so good. The speaker is almost drowning in an ocean of sorrow; and opposed to this dark medium is an island with fair sands, the land of stability and happiness. We expect the poem to close with another repudiatory address to the threatening wave of sorrow:

Do not drown me now;
I am swimming there

Instead, Hughes sees that the only way to a new stability is to trust oneself to the overwhelming wave of sorrow. And here is the whole poem:

Wave of sorrow,
Do not drown me now:

I see the island
Still ahead somehow.

I see the island
And its sands are fair:

Wave of sorrow,
Take me there.

Such a poem is like a pensée, with a coiled spring inside its heartfelt self. Its *dédoublement* in the last stanza shows that its first thought—"Do not drown me"—has turned into a truer second thought, "Take me there."

Everyone writing on Hughes has emphasized what he owes to the jazz of the Harlem clubs. There is not only the syncopated rhythm that he made his own, but also the demotic language that he introduced into his lyrics, summed up in the little poem "Advice":

Folks, I'm telling you,
birthing is hard
and dying is mean—
so get yourself
a little loving
in between.

That "little loving" is a constant theme in Hughes, and so is the brevity of the "in between." The *carpe diem* of the Harlem slums is the theme of his greatest suite, "Montage of a Dream Deferred" (1951), which he prefaced with a deeply thought-out note:

In terms of current Afro-American popular music and the sources from which it has progressed—jazz, ragtime, swing, blues, boogiewoogie, and be-bop—this poem on contemporary Harlem, like be-bop, is marked by conflicting changes, sudden nuances, sharp and impudent interjections, broken rhythms, and passages sometimes in the manner of the jam session, sometimes the popular song, punctuated by the riffs, runs, breaks and disc-tortions of the music of a community in transition.

It is the word "impudent" that distinguishes Hughes's version of Harlem. The impudent voice in the sequence is often his own, throwing a skeptical query at the easier Harlem self-deceptions:

What? So Soon?

I believe my old lady's
pregnant again!
Fate must have
some kind of trickeration
to populate the
cullud nation!

Comment against Lamp Post
You call it fate?

The antithetical positions exposed in such poems are reminiscent of Hughes's stories of Jesse B. Semple, otherwise known as "Simple." In those pieces, Simple tells an anecdote concerning racism to a black friend. The friend, taking a "larger" view, tries to put a better construction on the anecdote, or tries to convince Simple that things aren't so bad as they seem. Simple and his friend are both "right": Simple is right about the incident, and his friend is right about there being larger social truths than those available from a single person's experience. These contrasting points of view animate Hughes's poems as well as his prose; Hughes can see both the individual dream and the larger structural causes of the dream's defeat.

It is for this reason that Hughes needs to be a choral writer, casting many of his poems as a mélange of voices. A typical choir of voices can be heard in the theme poem of his sequence, called "Deferred." The very multiplicity of wishes rising from the tenements of Harlem exposes the hopelessness of wishing: How many of these wishes will come true?

This year, maybe do you think I can graduate? . . .
To get through high at twenty's kind of late—
But maybe this year I can graduate.

Maybe now I can have that white enamel stove. . . .

Me, I always did want to study French . . .

Someday,
I'm gonna buy two new suits
at once!

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All I want is
one more bottle of gin.

All I want is to see
my furniture paid for. . . .

I want to pass the civil service.

I want a television set.

You know, as old as I am.
I ain't never
owned a decent radio yet?

I'd like to take up Bach.

Montage
of a dream
deferred.

Buddy, have you heard?

Hughes makes cunning juxtapositions. It is no accident, I think, that the voice of the person who minds never having had a decent radio precedes the voice of the person who knows of the existence of Bach. Only someone who wants to hear music wants a decent radio; any radio will do for listening to the news. Though the untutored person who wants a better radio has probably (unlike the church organist) never heard of Bach, the musical talent may be the same. The person who wants two new suits at once is one of those restless souls who thirst for variety in life; to have one's choice absolutely circumscribed by the one wearable suit in the house bothers a certain temperament. These modest wishes—"one more bottle of gin" is not, after all, a sign of depravity—are the songs of America singing that Hughes, like Whitman, hears. They are signs of intellectual and aesthetic and erotic desire; and they are going to expire unsatisfied but not unheard, if Hughes has anything to say about it.

Hughes's choral poetics is one of universal desires. They are not unsatisfiable desires, they are not expensive desires, they are not evil desires. A society in which such simple and decent dreams are frustrated is the morally unjust society glimpsed through the interstices of *Montage of a Dream Deferred.* Hughes's Harlem has pimps and number-runners and illegitimate babies and alcohol and marijuana—but none of these things, *mutatis mutandis,* is unknown in "polite society," as both Hughes and his readers are well aware. Hughes dares to imply that Harlem life is universal life. At the same time, he avers that it is a special species of human life that its inhabitants would be sorry to lose. The speaker of "Nightmare Boogie" imagines a world in which the million black faces of America turn "dead white":

I had a dream
and I could see
a million faces
black as me!
A nightmare dream:
Quicker than light
All them faces
Turned dead white!

No Harlem resident wants a world in which the blues, jazz, folk songs, folktales, black jokes, black dances, and everything else that the culture has thought up has vanished. The fiction that blacks wish that they were white explodes in the presence of such a nightmare. Hughes's belief in the authenticity and the beauty of black culture made him write his poems from within that culture, which he saw as a culture "in transition." His poetry was one of the agents of the transition—not to whiteness, but to a fuller set of possibilities for blackness, for ordinary dreams that would no longer find themselves deferred.

Hughes's Platonic drive toward perfection led him to an optimism that was the obverse of a lurking despair. Did he really believe that the erotic United Nations of his "Little Song" would come to pass?

Carmencita loves Patrick.
Patrick loves Si Lan Chen.
Xenophon loves Mary Jane.
Hildegarde loves Ben.

Lucienne loves Eric.
Giovanni loves Emma Lee.
Natasha loves Miguelito—
And Miguelito loves me.

Maybe he was wise enough to speculate that since we are a single species, the universality of erotic attraction will finally defeat ethnic and racial tribalism. There is always a process of thinking behind Hughes's simplest poems. A lyric such as "Little Song" implicitly pits the erotic against the combined forces of nationalism, tradition, and language, and puts its bets on the erotic.

It is the intellectuality in Hughes's work that a cursory reading is likely to underestimate. Much has been said about how the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, and how evil destroys the souls of those who practice it, rather than the souls of their victims. But here is Hughes's version of these truisms, turned into a "Lynching Song":

Pull at the rope!
O, pull it high!
Let the white folks live
And the black boy die.

Pull it, boys,
With a bloody cry.
Let the black boy spin
While the white folks die.

The white folks die?
What do you mean—
The white folks die?

That black boy's
Still body
Says
NOT I.

Hughes's poems, when they are good, show this concentration of exposition and this gift for alert reversal. They address primary human wishes and actions through the quick sketch, a form of social synecdoche. When Hughes is preaching or sloganeering, he is no more interesting, poetically speaking, than any other propagandist. But even his slackest poems are of interest as documents in an American life lived with great optimism in great loneliness, under conditions often demeaning to dignity.

There was, there is, no country in which everyone starts off equal; but the America that Hughes was born into was still the America of Jim Crow and laws against "miscegenation." He simply wouldn't have it that America could so betray itself, and so he called America to order over and over again, reminding it of its own founding principles. Like all reformers, he often looks foolish, especially in retrospect. And yet his taunts had the power to corrode the hypocrisy they exposed. When the Red Cross segregated blood donations, he fired off a squib:

The Angel of Mercy's
Got her wings in the mud,
And all because of
Negro blood.

If this 1943 poem were not firmly in place in Hughes's *Collected Poems,* who would now remember that the Red Cross practiced Jim Crow on blood? Rampersad's brief notes clear up such topical references, and make us see Hughes's poems as documents of black life, in its personal and historical dimensions.

The black American intellectual's search for a viable life has taken many forms, and Hughes explored most of them—the white university, the black university, the return to Africa, European expatriation, internationalism via the Communist Party, life in Harlem, mixed-race life among bohemians. Almost the only option not open to Hughes was "passing." The "options," while seemingly voluntary, are all coerced by the ever-renewed experience of racist prejudice. Hughes's final option was to claim that freedom would have the last word. Racists may think to burn or imprison or kill freedom by burning churches or imprisoning blacks or killing men:

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But Freedom
Stands up and laughs
In their faces
And says,
No—
Not so!
No!

An unprovable statement, even an impotent negation. The belief in Platonic absolutes such as Freedom dies hard in Hughes, but the belief in the power of art dies even harder. The last poem in the *Collected Poems* represents his body and his song cast up as flotsam after his death. The "yet" in the poem derives from the wind of the brave spirit still present in this book:

On the shoals of Nowhere,
Cast up—my boat,
Bow all broken,
No longer afloat.

On the shoals of Nowhere,
Wasted—my song—
Yet taken by the sea wind
And blown along.

Unlike most of his own contemporaries, and unlike many of ours, Hughes was truthful enough to say that after death one is nowhere. Yet he remained sanguine about the persistence of his song, even though he knew that the topical and propagandistic side of it would be wasted by time. True poems, on the other hand, withstand historical vicissitude and are "blown along." It is a pity that the dreary censorship inflicted on public school textbooks will prevent many of Hughes's most powerful poems from reaching the very audience that would respond to them most ardently.

HELEN VENDLER is Porter University Professor at Harvard University. A collection of her essays, *Soul Says*, is forthcoming this spring from Harvard University Press.

Far from the Modern Crowd

BY DENIS DONOGHUE

Hardy: A Biography by Martin Seymour-Smith

(St. Martin's Press, 886 pp., $35)

This biography of Thomas Hardy is causing quite a stir in England. Not surprisingly. To the English, Hardy is not just a writer like any other; not just a great novelist, even, such as George Eliot or Conrad. He is a cultural icon. More than any other modern writer of comparable stature, he touches the nerve of a cherished and endangered myth.

One of Hardy's most pressing themes, in his poetry as in *Under the Greenwood Tree*, *The Woodlanders* and other novels, is the destruction of English rural life by the encroaching cities: London, Birmingham, Manchester, Liverpool and the industrial Midlands. In the nineteenth century, England committed itself to an urban and imperial vocation, but it also clung to the conviction that its true and permanent character is disclosed in fields and villages, the mutual care of neighbors, the work of their hands. Manchester was inevitable, but Dorchester was still the soul of Old England.

Hardy's novels, like Constable's landscapes, speak to that embattled belief. So also, in their different ways, do Lawrence's *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love*, Forster's *Howards End* and Charles Tomlinson's *Seeing is Believing*. Hardy is the novelist of English "loving-kindness," and of the brutality of social and domestic arrangements, and of the bleakness of Egdon Heath. He is also the poet and novelist who, more than any other, is at one with the diverse social concerns of Wordsworth and Shelley. All is not lost, English readers feel in the Age of Thatcher and Major, if Hardy and Lawrence keep those concerns alive.

There is another issue. Those English writers who have recently been repudiating the literature of High Modernism take Hardy and Lawrence as embodiments of the great alternative. If you think that the High Modernism of Pound, Eliot, Joyce, Wyndham Lewis and Yeats was an aberration, alien to the genius of the English language and its traditions, you are likely to point to Hardy and Lawrence as writers who made the right choice and stuck to it. Philip Larkin and Donald Davie represent this belief, so far as it touches Hardy. Davie's critical responses to Pound, Eliot and Yeats are complicated and various, and perhaps inconsistent, but in *Thomas Hardy and British Poetry*, which appeared in 1973, he did much to establish Hardy's centrality in modern English poetry. Larkin did even more. Not only did he acclaim Hardy as incomparably the greatest modern poet in English, but he edited the *Oxford Book of Twentieth Century English Verse*, also in 1973, to enforce that view. Hardy is the first poet whom the reader of that book meets, and his poetry governs the relation of the other poets to him and to one another. Even *The Waste Land* comes to appear eccentric, a freak of culture, in the light of Hardy's lyrics and ballads.

The conflict between High Modernism and Hardy's native strain is clear. Pound, it is true, admired Hardy and sent him a few of his poems; he thought that Hardy's poems benefited in clarity and edge from his experience of writing novels. And Proust, too, admired Hardy's novels—but that didn't count across the Channel. It was Eliot, more authoritatively than Pound or Lewis, who defined the presiding literary movement, and he was not willing to take Hardy seriously or generously. In *After Strange Gods*, he wrote that Hardy's "Barbara of the House of Grebe" was written "solely to provide a satisfaction for some morbid emotion." Of Hardy's style, Eliot said that it sometimes achieved the sublime without ever having passed through the stage of being good. Henry James, too, attacked Hardy's fiction and denounced *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, in a letter to Robert Louis Stevenson, as "vile." "The pretense of 'sexuality' is only equaled," he said, "by the absence of it." Reviewing *Far from the Madding Crowd*, James thought it a poor imitation of George Eliot's *Silas Marner*: the only figures he found convincing in it were the sheep and the dogs.

It was Eliot, however, who made the difference, who effectively kept Hardy out of the standard highbrow version of modern literature. The fact that Eliot's talent had deeper affiliations with Poe and Tennyson than with James and Flaubert only makes his rhetorical triumph more remarkable. He created the taste that gave Hardy over to a multitude of common readers but made him appear, in the official history of modern literature, a sideshow. Though Hardy lived long enough to see *The Waste Land* and *Ulysses* published, in the story of High Modernism, as Eliot told it, he was only a minor nuisance.

And yet the question of Hardy has not receded. Indeed, it has become more contentious than ever, now that Larkin's image has been tarnished. The

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publication of Larkin's letters, and of Andrew Motion's biography, has made it clear that he was a nasty piece of work, horrid in his vulgarity and his provincialism. Being English in Larkin's way doesn't now appear as noble a state as it did twenty years ago. There are signs of a diminished regard for Larkin's poems, too, in that lurid context. So it is all the more urgent for English readers to sustain the images of Hardy and Lawrence not only as major writers but as fit emblems of the soul of England.

Leavis, of course, made the case for Lawrence, even to the extent of using his work to diminish Eliot's, and Leavis admired a few of Hardy's poems. But he did not proclaim Hardy as he once proclaimed Hopkins, Eliot, Pound and Empson before giving Lawrence supreme acknowledgment as the greatest modern English writer. No major critic has made a comparable case for Hardy's novels. There has been a lot of commentary, some of it superb, such as Ian Gregor's *The Great Web* (1974). But the claims for Hardy as a novelist have arisen more strongly from the affection of the common reader than from the analysis of critics. Many readers gladly regard Hardy's novels and poems as constituting a particularly English concern, in a sense in which the novels of Conrad, Ford and Wells do not: they are exemplars of the English heritage.

Only two biographical matters about Hardy are commonly accepted. The first one is that he married Emma Gifford on September 17, 1874, and for some years they were happy, and later they became estranged. The standard explanation is that Emma was jealous of Hardy's success, and bitter about one of the women he fell for, Florence Henniker. After a while Emma started disliking Hardy, and regularly denounced him to their friends. She wasn't keen on his writings either, and disapproved in particular of *Jude the Obscure*. In her later years she was often ill and mentally distracted. But after her death on November 27, 1912, Hardy wrote his greatest love poems, summoning her to enter his life again as the spirit of love she had been when their world was young. The fact that in 1912 he was involved with another woman, Florence Dugdale, did not inhibit his verse or cool his nostalgia. In 1914 he married Florence, but by then he had tired of her mannerisms, her literary pretensions. In the event, he was just as unhappy with her as he had been, in the later years of the marriage, with Emma.

The second accepted thing about Hardy is that he always wanted to be a poet but had to write novels for a living. Many of the novels sold well—as they still do—but they were harshly reviewed. Disgusted with the conditions under which he had to court his critics and face a common imputation of indecency, Hardy gave up the trade after the publication of *Jude the Obscure* in 1895 and the revised version of *The Well-Beloved* in 1897. "Well, if this sort of thing continues," he said after the publication of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, "no more novel-writing for me: a man must be a fool to deliberately stand up to be shot at." But he soldiered on for six years before giving up. For the rest of his long life, he devoted himself to poetry and, in *The Dynasts*, to poetic drama.

Hardy was born on June 2, 1840, at Bockhampton in Dorset, the son of Thomas and Jemima Hardy. His father was a stonemason and bricklayer, his mother had been a domestic servant before her marriage. Hardy's formal education was meager and it ended in 1856 when he became an apprentice to John Hicks, an architect and church restorer in Dorchester. Like Jude Fawley in *Jude the Obscure*, Hardy labored over his Latin grammar and picked up the rudiments of Greek, but his reading was always erratic. His first novel was not published, but *Desperate Remedies* (1871) set him on a career that he found mostly an irritation. Over a period of twenty-five years he published fifteen works of fiction, the best of them being *Under the Greenwood Tree, The Return of the Native, The Mayor of Casterbridge, The Woodlanders, Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure*.

Meanwhile, he married, and lived to regret it, but he did not curb his susceptibility to pretty women: Tryphena Sparks, Cassie Pole, Helen Paterson, Florence Henniker and others not known. He met Florence Dugdale in 1905, and they became lovers in 1906 or a little later. She acted as Hardy's amanuensis and in 1910 joined the household as Emma's companion. When she became the second Mrs. Hardy, she spent most of her energy hating her predecessor: she could not abide Emma's posthumous transfiguration in Hardy's mind and poetry. Gradually she succumbed to her woes, and became intermittently a bit deranged. She was never fitted to be Hardy's wife, even though she served the apprenticeship of being his lover. That didn't help her when in his old age he became enchanted by yet another woman, Gertrude Bugler. He died on January 11, 1928. Florence regained some happiness during the remaining years. She died in 1937.

The biographical confusions about Hardy began as soon as he was cold in the grave. In their last years together Florence got the notion of writing his life, but she couldn't do it, couldn't organize the materials. Hardy wrote it for her. He also ghost-wrote one or two stories published under her name. All she could do with the text of the *Life* was tinker with the sentences, cut out the most glowing tributes to Emma, and let it go. It was published in two volumes under her name: *The Early Life of Thomas Hardy, 1840-1891* (1928) and *The Later Years of Thomas Hardy, 1892-1928* (1930).

For several years those books were accepted as giving a true and faithful account of Hardy's life. Inevitably, many later biographers have not been convinced, and have assumed the role of revisionists. The most formidable of these are Robert Gittings, J.O. Bailey and Michael Millgate. The general effect of their ministries—and many more besides—is to present Hardy as the meanest of men, devious and calculating. In Millgate's *Thomas Hardy: A Critical Biography* (1982), Hardy is reduced to a country bumpkin, a yokel who never acquired any social grace and was awkward among the intelligentsia of London. Those who don't care for Hardy are permitted to think him a womanizer, subject to the disability of his being sexually impotent, and so on.

Martin Seymour-Smith is enraged by these and other biographical interventions, and he has written this large book to refute them. He refers to "those moralists from the lowlands who now dance upon Hardy's grave." He is especially incensed by the claim that Hardy had a child by Tryphena Sparks. But he has many other sources of exasperation. He chides Gittings for saying that Hardy tried to conceal his lowly origin from Emma, and for describing him, walking the streets of London, as "a confirmed eavesdropper and voyeur." Seymour-Smith regards as "vituperative rubbish" Gittings's account of Emma's death. Millgate is charged with a hundred offenses, starting with his contention that Hardy's friendship with Horace Moule "must have had a sexual component." Millgate also claimed that Emma "permitted sexual intimacy" to Hardy in August 1870. There is no evidence for this, except that Arabella in *Jude the Obscure* gave Jude this service and used the pretense of pregnancy to trick him into marriage. There is also a poem, "The Place on the Map," which may or may not be autobiographical. Seymour-Smith rebukes Millgate for these speculations, but his own commentary is also speculative:

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> It may indeed be that Tom and Emma made love; perhaps they could not help themselves. In that case the poem might be based on a recollection of an occasion when Emma told Tom that she believed herself to be pregnant. Such beliefs are as common as they eventually prove to be misguided: anxiety can delay periods.

Millgate claims that Emma and Hardy had a wretched honeymoon. There is no evidence of this, according to Seymour-Smith. As the book proceeds, his patience with the precursors gives out. He calls Millgate "the academic," lumps him in with self-evidently crass "professors," mocks him as "that epitome of excellent judgment, a male academic critic" and accuses him of harboring "some grimly donnish delusion." Carl Weber, the author of *Hardy of Wessex—His Life and Literary Career* (1940), turns up as "the American professor who pretended that he knew Florence Hardy when in fact she would never receive him." Seymour-Smith's book would have been shorter and more readable if he had ignored his rivals and proceeded with the biography. Or if he had started with the most far-reaching if somewhat idiosyncratic commentary, which he doesn't mention, D.H. Lawrence's *A Study of Thomas Hardy*.

Lawrence was a great critic, as he showed again in *Studies in American Literature*. His understanding of Hardy is the most telling one we have, because more powerfully than any other critic he feels in Hardy's life and work the ache of inarticulate desires, and the pressures of those desires upon the lives his characters live, the wounds they suffer, the ways they survive not by "thinking" but by sensing however silently their relation to work and land, the spiritual force of place and region. Lawrence knew, too, that by native gift Hardy was closer to the tradition of gothic romance, as in *Wuthering Heights*, than to the realistic novel, as in *Middlemarch*; that he was brother to Melville rather than to Gissing or Bennett.

Seymour-Smith's main argument is that Hardy—or Tom, as he insists on calling him—was no bumpkin, but an artist who knew his genius and how to further it. He learned what he needed to know and outgrew the constriction of his early years. On the charge of deviousness, Seymour-Smith replies in a rather wan sentence that Hardy "was no more devious than anyone else would have been in his circumstances." If Hardy was not as cultivated as James, so much the worse for James. Seymour-Smith also thinks that Hardy's first marriage was not as miserable as it has been said to be and that its failure came later—about 1882, he thinks—than the date normally given. Emma was not the dreadful person of common legend; and, while she went a bit odd in later years, it was because she was "in the early stages of Alzheimer's disease." For most of its years, the marriage was much the same as other marriages, taking rough with smooth.

Seymour-Smith is eloquent on his dislikes. His choice victims are Edmund Gosse in Hardy's professional career and Florence Dugdale in his personal life. He thinks Gosse a creep and a liar:

> That Gosse could shuffle through snaps of pretty boys while mourning Browning, and indulge perfectly decent feelings of love, lust or both for Hamo Thornycroft, and then have his fellow clubmen (those whose admiration he required for the sake of his career) register his disapproval of *Jude* really was a shocking and, above all, disappointing matter to his friend. Had Tom told him that he had been sad as well as angry about it, he might have been even more accurate. But Gosse's condemnation of *Jude*, whether in or out of drink, justifies the cruel verdict of Virginia Woolf, one of those who really loved Hardy: Gosse, she wrote, was a "crafty, worldly, prim, astute little beast . . . a mean skunk."

This is much ado—and inaccurate—about little. Gosse's two reviews of *Jude* are not condemnations, they are appreciations, and entirely fair. The longer one, in *Cosmopolis*, is not fully represented by the only sentence in it that has been remembered: "What has Providence done to Mr. Hardy that he should rise up in the arable land of Wessex and shake his fist at his Creator?" Hardy was grateful for the reviews, and wrote to Gosse taking up a number of his points. Years later, Hardy told him that "the only time you made me really angry was when you said to my face at the lunchtable at the Savile that *Jude* was the most indecent novel ever written." At least Gosse didn't say it behind Hardy's back or to divert the clubmen. The friendship between the two of them was not strained.

But it is Florence who takes the most systematic drubbing from Seymour-Smith. He presents her as querulous, inept, absurd in her literary ambition and in every respect tedious:

> We know that her complaints were constitutional, and would have continued even had she been created queen of the realm and the world's chief novelist: discontent was her raison d'être.

She was a liar, too, according to Seymour-Smith. He doesn't believe a word she said. It was Florence, he claims, who first bad-mouthed Emma and put it about that she was unhinged. She also—but this is mere speculation—forced Hardy to marry her:

> So at the beginning of February she renewed her assault, utilizing the various means (sexual and otherwise) that she had by now learned. Sad and reproachful looks; being made to feel ill at bedtime by the position into which she had been placed; her lack of "real feeling" in sexual matters having been sacrificed for the sake of his passion; poor eating; sulking—who knows?

Who, indeed?

It is surprising, in a book as long as this one, that Seymour-Smith hasn't found space to adjudicate some fundamental issues. He quotes a note of Hardy's, dated July 17, 1868: "Perhaps I can do a volume of poems consisting of the *other side* of common emotions." The note ends, reasonably enough: "What that means is not quite clear." Seymour-Smith thinks that "by the 'other side' he meant the 'unrecognized' side, the 'shadow' which people do not like to acknowledge." Hardy's fiction, he continues, "is full of examples of how people really feel, as distinct from how they would like it to be said they feel."

This doesn't seem to meet the phrase. A note that Hardy made a week later is closer to the mark. "Novelty of *position* and *view* in relation to a known subject is more taking among the readers of light literature than even absolute novelty of subject." The most extreme version of this novelty in Hardy is his way of writing of common emotions as if he were Lazarus, come back from the grave to correct our sense of them. He rarely engaged with an object or an event as if it were present, palpable. I might call his procedure the Emma principle: let her die, then bid her to live in his words, summon her into his bereft life. Like many nineteenth-century writers, as Robert Martin Adams has elucidated in his *Nil*, Hardy's mind paid most attention to objects when they were just about to disappear. He was prepared for any relation, provided it marked the distance between his mind and the object of its attention. His favorite ways were—to use a phrase of Emily Dickinson's—routes of evanescence. His imagination was on principle posthumous to its concerns, as in a note he jotted down sometime in July 1888 about the "value of life":

> I have attempted many modes of finding it. For my part, if there is any way of getting a melancholy satisfaction out of life, it lies in dying, so to speak, before one is out of the flesh; by which I mean putting on the manner of ghosts, wandering in their haunts and taking their views of surrounding things. To think of life passing away is a sadness; to think of it as past is at least tolerable.

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Another topic left dangling in Seymour-Smith's book is the question of Hardy's "thought" on first and last things. He regularly went to church, but he was not a Christian. "I dream of an alliance between religions freed from dogmas," he said. Like Matthew Arnold, he thought that the only religion worth preserving would be created by poetry. But, to be fair, Hardy never regarded himself as a heavy thinker. He read bits of Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Darwin and McTaggart, and he made the mistake of announcing his creed, in the "Apology" to *Late Lyrics and Earlier*, as "evolutionary meliorism": things may get better if you take a sufficiently long view of them and meantime "exact a full look at the worst." There is nothing much wrong with the philosophy, it is merely a version of Stoicism with a fitful light at the end of a long tunnel. But it was imprudent of Hardy to declare a philosophic position, good or bad: he should have let the books stand without comment. The "Apology" is too apologetic, too defensive. Hardy was wiser when he disclaimed any consistent philosophy and asserted that the notions to be found in his books were "seemings."

I wish, too, that Seymour-Smith had himself taken a longer view, given a more equable account of Hardy's contexts. He gives only a meager sense of mid-Victorian England, its works and days. Victorian society was, according to his account, entirely hypocritical. Mrs. Grundy was its true representative. "No conspiracy has been more open than the Grundyism of the Victorians," he claims. It is too late, however, for this stereotype. It is also late to have a biography appear that takes so little interest in Hardy's styles of prose and verse. Eliot may have been wrong or snide about Hardy's prose. R.P. Blackmur, too, may have been insolent in offering to rewrite one of Hardy's poems to improve it. But the question of Hardy's style or styles should at least be raised. He often wrote English as if he wished it were a different language or had taken a different turn at a crucial moment it its history. It is not surprising that he liked William Barnes, who spent his life trying to write English as if it were still Anglo-Saxon, free of Latin, French and Italian. Seymour-Smith has no visible interest in this question. He uses the novels and poems as biographical evidence, but he doesn't examine them intrinsically. He is primarily, if not solely, interested in showing that Hardy was a better man than the common opinion of him holds.

This is an honorable intent, but it doesn't clarify the public issues. It was never a good idea to claim that Larkin was a nice man and that his poems therefore keep worthy values alive. In Hardy's case it would be more persuasive to show his values operative where they count, in the novels and poems. David Trotter has done some of this work in his *The English Novel in History, 1895-1920* (1993):

> In *The Woodlanders* (1887), the lamp used by a woman reading at night leaves a layer of smoke on a ceiling, and card-players leave greasy thumbprints on their cards: these alterations of surface evoke, indeed embody, personality and community. Grace Melbury knows Giles Wintberbourne by the layers which his work has subtracted from his person—the nails in his boots, seen from below, "silver-bright with walking"—or added to it: the fragments of apple-rind on the brim of his hat, the pips clinging to the down on his arms and his beard.

These are not the details to which Seymour-Smith is alert, but they speak more convincingly of Hardy as a great English writer than any amount of domestic or professional lore.

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TRB *continued from page 4*

"contradictory"; majorities may electronically "cancel out" special interests. Now, certainly one can imagine, as Kaus suggests, structural tinkering that would encourage any such tendency. But, first of all, the tinkering he champions—the line-item veto—is flawed. It implausibly asks the president to play martyr, and alone incur the wrath of many special interests. A better idea was suggested in a *New York Times* editorial: let the president send any line item back to Congress for a simple majority vote, innocently asking legislators to make sure their constituents really favor *this particular* special interest. One by one, hunks of pork could be killed.

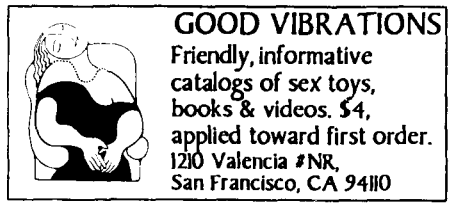
Unfortunately, deputizing the majority gets trickier once we come to the real budget-busters: middle-class tax cuts, Social Security, Medicare. Here, a plebiscite may *help* "special interests," because they're huge. Most Americans are middle-class taxpayers. Most will someday get Social Security or Medicare, and many get them now.

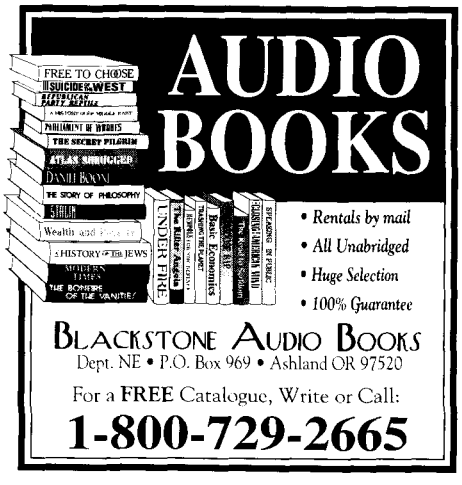
This, of course, is one problem with the hallowed distinction in political rhetoric between "the people" and "special interests." Kasich, for example, denounces selfish special interests but insists that the *people* are prepared to sacrifice. Nonsense. The Republicans' own pollster, Frank Luntz, wrote in a memo that most Americans think the budget can be balanced by cutting "waste, fraud and abuse." Luntz does claim (with a straight face) that most people are willing to "make sacrifices"—but only so long as they don't "pay higher taxes or see their services cut." He advises, "If we talk about pain, we lose." Luntz's poll is the second kind of hyperdemocracy—majority sentiment, electronically sensed and rapidly transmitted to policymakers. It's thus evidence that the two kinds of hyperdemocracy aren't benignly "contradictory." And by the way: the Contract with America was shaped by an earlier round of Luntz's research. It is itself an example of hyperdemocracy, type two—the type Kaus hopes will favor fiscal integrity. I rest my case.

Technology *can* help solve the problems it creates—just not easily. Surely, the electorate can grasp that it *is* the special interests, and might even abide by the implications of this fact, if a person of rhetorical power used T.V. to lay them out. But who? Kasich? Maybe. Presumably not Gingrich, with his longstanding dishonesty on the budget.

Granted, lots of Democrats are also guilty of dishonesty. For years almost all politicians have obeyed their "invisible fence" collars. But it's the Republicans who have just charged into town with nearly unprecedented smugness, promising a "revolutionary" break with the past. And it's the Republicans who chose to etch their dishonesty in stone.

ROBERT WRIGHT





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SOUTH HADLEY DIARIST

Poets and parents

JAMES MERRILL'S NEWEST VOLUME of poems—or the galleys, publication being some seven weeks ahead—had just arrived in the mail when the telephone rang with news of his sudden death. I'd noted that very day how the new book, *A Scattering of Salts*, draws its title from a line in a poem I had snatched gleefully for publication in this magazine a few years ago. Called "A Downward Look," it opens the book with an aerial view of the Earth, from clouds seen as foaming bath water. A typically lighthearted image, joined to a typically light-handed allusion. Surely Merrill was referring to Dante's "Love that moves the sun and the other stars" when he wrote: "On high, the love / That drew the bath and scattered it with salts / Still radiates new projects old as day, / And hardly registers the tug / When, far beneath, a wrinkled, baby hand / Happens upon the plug." Merrill usually meant graver things than he said, and, in the aftershock of his death, these words took on a new, bittersweet aptness. The poet who began dazzling the literary world soon after his graduation from Amherst College, and who had radiated new projects with tireless invention until a month before his sixty-ninth birthday, had seen the plug pulled. Or his admirers had; for me, a longtime friend if not a close one, the tug felt violent.

ONCE, WHEN A FELLOW POET asked me for my definition of the Ideal Reader, I answered instinctively with just two words: "James Merrill." His poems—formally brilliant without aridity, deeply personal without self-indulgence—offered, to me, an inspiring model. W. H. Auden, one of Merrill's own principal models, once wrote that of all our criteria for evaluating literature, pleasure is the least fallible. James Merrill's work overflows with his pleasure in being alive, a delight so contagious that, as I wrote my own poems, he was one of the very few people I thought consciously of hoping to please. I was not alone: dozens of younger poets thought of him as a father-figure. He handed out allowances, in the form of generous fellowships from the Ingram Merrill Foundation he established, and he wrote dust jacket blurbs that were marvels of compressed energy and tact (who else can claim to have elevated that hackneyed genre to the heights of poetry?), but his liberality went beyond such things. In person, in letters, he knew just how much to exaggerate your virtues so that you couldn't dismiss what he said—and had to work harder. Those letters made you feel that yours, too, should set high standards for metaphor and mischief. "There are mosquitoes," he wrote me last year from Key West, "not the beautiful ones that look like municipal sculpture." No, these looked like the children "who used to dance for pennies on railroad platforms in the '30s."

NOW THAT HE'S gone, I try to console myself that the Ideal Reader left more than a dozen volumes of poems—a number of them Ideal Poems—for the rest of us to reread. And I think of his many pages recounting witty conversations with the dead, reached via the Ouija board. James Merrill is probably the only epic poet in history who made the afterlife look fun. I hope that the party up there in the foaming clouds is as lively as the ones he brightened on Earth.

IF JAMES MERRILL WAS A FATHER figure in poetry, Amy Clampitt was even more definitively my mother. (In this, too, I was not alone: many younger poets sought her generous guidance.) For fifteen years she and I shared drafts of nearly every poem we wrote, though in receiving her criticisms, I got the much better deal. Her death at the age of 74 last September seemed impossible, even if one had seen her slender frame starved to nearly nothing from cancer. Never have I met anyone who combined such seriousness of purpose with such dizzying, childlike vivacity. Having discovered her vocation late—her first book, *The Kingfisher*, was published when she was 63—she had taken in her rapid stride the overwhelming acclaim our culture usually reserves only for novelists. As if hardly pausing to look up, she wrote in the next eleven years a book of essays and a play and four more volumes of poems, densely musical and fiercely original.

BUT SHE DID LOOK UP, TO WATCH birds—all of which the Iowa farmer's daughter seemed to know personally, by their colorful names. She peered down at wildflowers and derived morals from moss. Her first published poem in *The New Yorker*, "The Sun Underfoot Among the Sundews," heralded all the traits we would come to think of as distinctively Clampitt: a microscopically detailed vision ("each / hair-tip a sticky mirror / afire with sunlight"); a wry refusal, in the midst of unending wonder, to believe in a First Cause (maybe it was only "that backhand, round- / about refusal to assume responsibility / known as Natural Selection"); and an abandonment to pure sensation ("but the sun / underfoot is so dazzling / down there among the sundews,/ there is so much light / in the cup that, looking, / you start to fall upward"). Falling upward: thinking back to Clampitt's first major poem recalls Merrill's "A Downward Look," and I pick up his final book now to discover that, with the symmetry he relished, it ends with a poem called "An Upward Look." I haven't unraveled its difficulties yet, but on first reading I admire how he has turned bath salts into the salts strewn at Carthage ("O heart green acre sown with salt / by the departing occupier"). And, chillingly, I note how the wide spaces typed between certain words, unusual in Merrill, makes the poem look not only like scattered salt but a little like "A Silence," the poem that concludes Clampitt's last book, *A Silence Opens*. She, too, had chosen at the end to open spaces between words, to allow for all the things poetry cannot say, and to respect the silence she believed was waiting for each of us.

IN HER FINAL WEEKS SHE HAD little strength to speak but, fittingly, her last really animated conversation had to do with a book. It was the advance galley of Alice Munro's *Open Secrets*, and when I went to visit with Ann Close (the editor Munro, Clampitt and I happened to share), Clampitt had dozens of questions for Close about the small Canadian towns Munro set her stories in. Which were real family names, and which made up? And which were our favorite stories? (Hers was "Spaceships Have Landed.") Modestly she claimed that Munro had many talents that went beyond her own. But she took pleasure in themes they had in common. Her words came out breathlessly, with spaces between them: "Trees. Rivers. Rain. And the names of things that grow." It's a parent's job to teach us to name things. For a generation of younger writers, Amy Clampitt and James Merrill taught by example—and made it clear that we're never too old to need someone to look up to.

MARY JO SALTER

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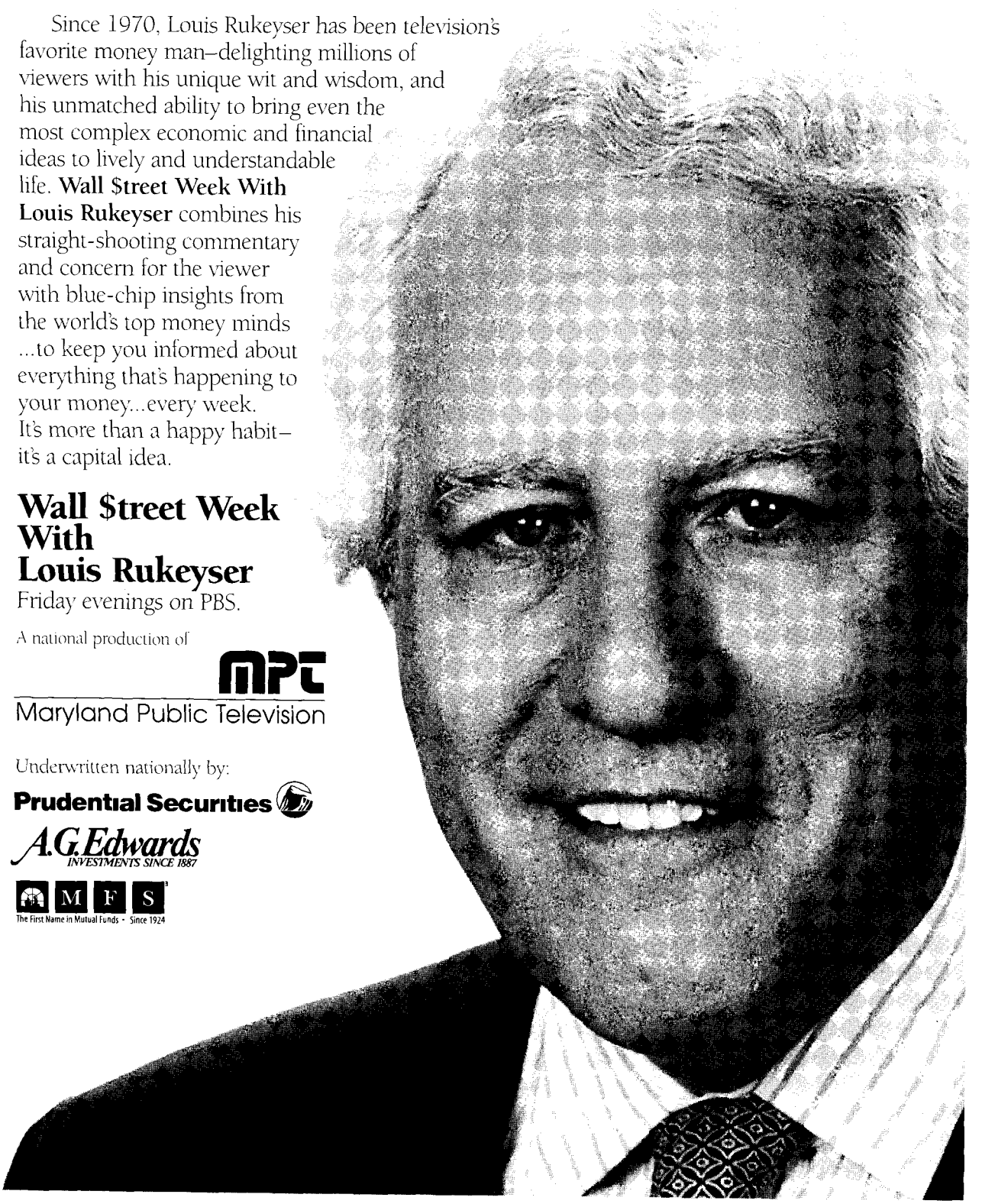

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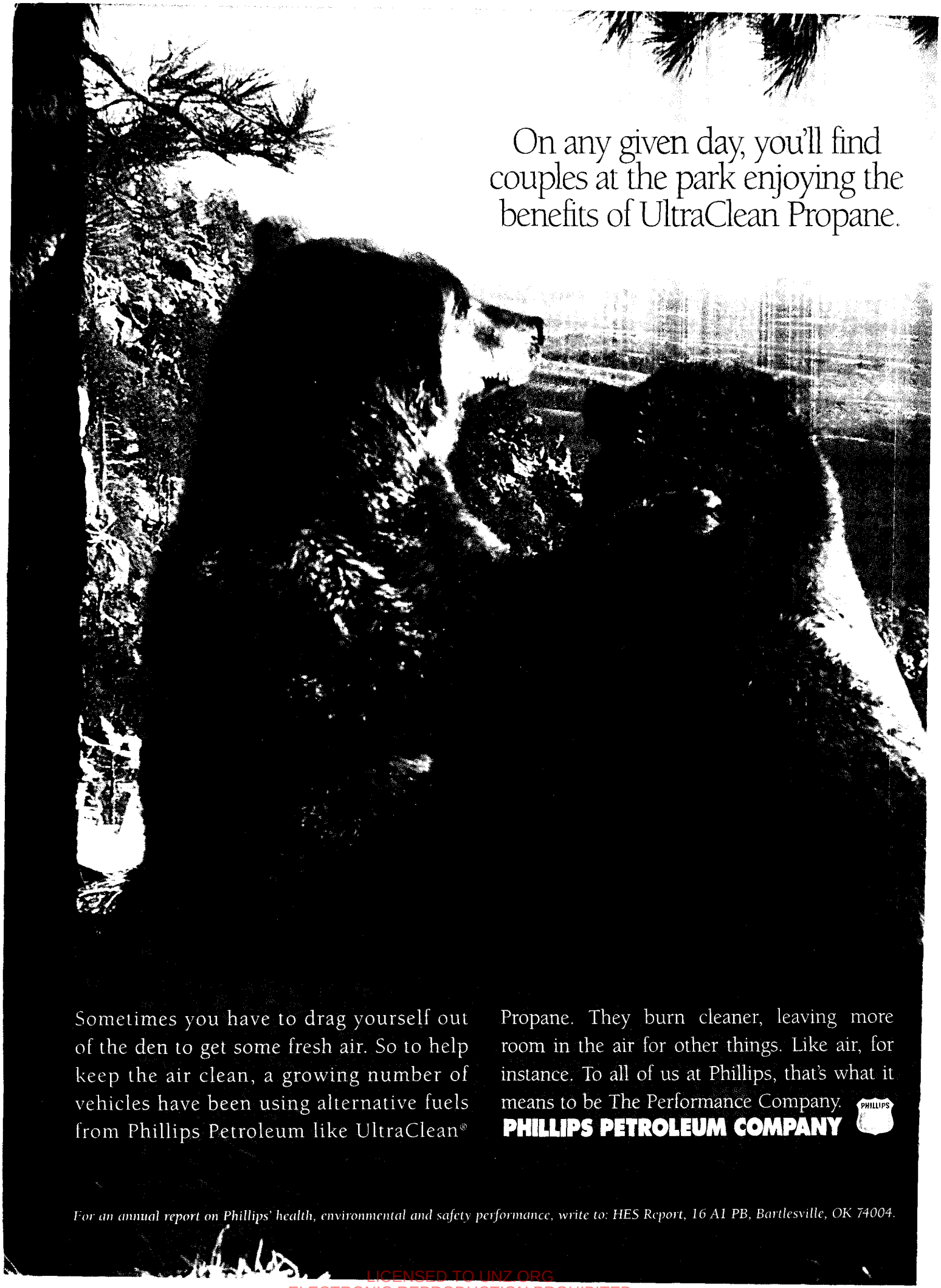

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